

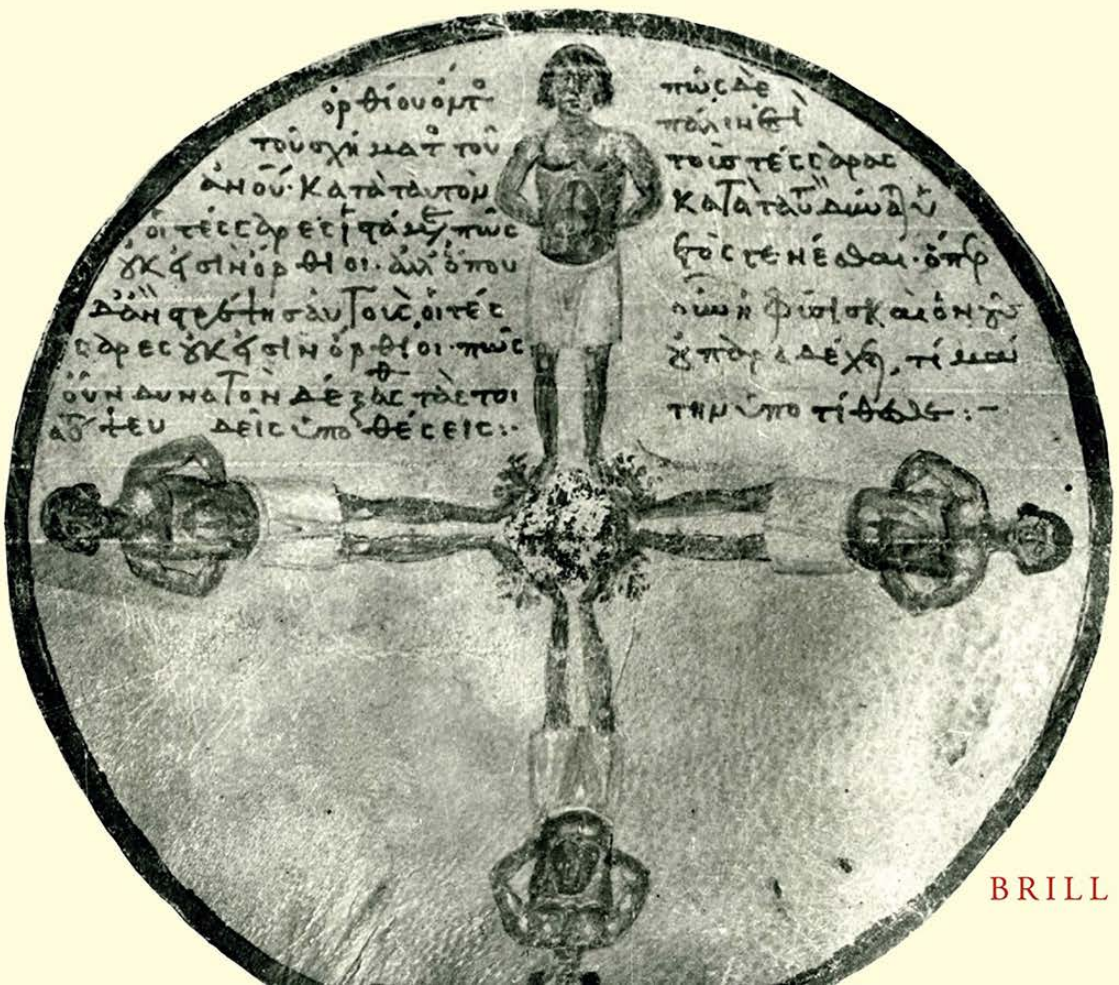
BYZANTINA AUSTRALIENSIA

FEAST, FAST OR FAMINE

FOOD AND DRINK IN BYZANTIUM

Edited by

Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka



BRILL

Feast, Fast or Famine

Byzantina Australiensia

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Εἰ δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀντιπόδων ἐπεξεργαστικώτερον θελήσειέ τις ζητῆσαι,
ῥαδίως τοὺς γράμδεις μύθους αὐτῶν ἀνακαλύψει.

Cosmas Indicopleustes, I,20.



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ABBREVIATIONS

- BGU *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden* (Berlin 1895-)
- BMGS *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*.
- BZ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.
- CFHB *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*.
- CIJ *Corpus Inscriptionem Judaicorum*.
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionem Latinorum*.
- CJ *Codex Justinianus*, ed. P. Krüger, in: CJC ii (Berlin¹³ 1963).
- CJC *Corpus Juris Civilis*, I: *Institutiones*, ed. P. Krüger; *Digesta*, ed. Th. Mommsen; II: *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. P. Krüger; III: *Novellae*, edd. R. Schöll, W. Kroll (Berlin, 1892-1895, repr. 1945-1963).
- CPJ *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicorum*.
- CSHB *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*.
- CTh *Theodosiani libri xvi cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, edd. Th. Mommsen, P. Meyer et al. (Berlin 1905) (Eng. trans. *Codex Theodosianus* trans. C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code* [Princeton 1952]).
- DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*.
- JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*.
- LRE A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: a social, economic and administrative survey* (Oxford 1964).
- ODB *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A.P. Kazhdan, 3 vols (New York and Oxford 1991).
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris).
- RE *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

INTRODUCTION

This volume presents selected papers from the biennial conference of the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies held in Adelaide, 2003, augmented by contributions from a number of international scholars. The 2003 conference theme was 'Feast, Fast or Famine. Food and drink in Byzantium', a topic which provided a forum for a variety of papers and discussions ranging from military logistics to the vegetarian diet. Given the increasing interest of scholars in the study of Graeco-Roman and Byzantine social history, and the wealth of material which still remains to be treated with an eye to social information, in addition to more traditional religious, political or military foci, the wide variety of approaches represented in the studies below will come as no surprise.

There has been an increasing interest in the study of food and drink, and its supply and consumption in recent decades. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the attention it receives in individual monographs or as an integral aspect of other investigations, such as studies on late antique ascetic practices. However, the fact that in 2003 alone food and drink in Byzantium was the focus of two international conferences is testimony to an increasing acknowledgement of its value as a focused area of investigation.¹

On the topic of food and drink in the Greek, Roman and early Byzantine worlds there is a variety of scholarship. A useful example is Peter Garnsey's studies of famine and food. His works include investigations into food crises, nutrition and malnutrition, and do so within the context of Graeco-Roman society, taking into account such critical elements as government, economy, urban and rural considerations, as well as wealth, status and gender. Garnsey stresses a fact that is increasingly being acknowledged, that the study of food and drink can be used as an entry into understanding Greek and Roman society.² Another example is the

¹ In addition to the Australian conference, the 37th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies was held on the theme 'Eat, Drink and be Merry' (Luke 12:19): *Production, consumption and celebration of food and wine in Byzantium*, University of Birmingham, 29-31 March 2003; and later in 2003 the same university hosted a more focused conference, see J. Haldon (ed.), *General issues in the study of medieval logistics: sources, problems and methodologies* (Papers of the First Workshop in Medieval Logistics, Birmingham, November 2003, Leiden 2004/5 [forthcoming]).

² See P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World. Responses to risk and crisis* (Cambridge 1988); id., *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity. Essays in social and economic history* (Cambridge 1998); id., *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge 1999), xii. On the topic of famine, see also D.C. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire. A systematic survey of subsistence crises and epidemics* (Birmingham Byzantine & Ottoman Monographs v.9, Aldershot 2003);

collection of papers (*Dining in a Classical Context*) that investigate the symposium over a vast period of Greek and Roman history, highlighting through the study the diverse relations between the act of dining and the life of antiquity.³ Likewise the noteworthy study edited by Wilkins et al., *Food in Antiquity*,⁴ which, with over thirty contributions to the corpus, provides a significant investigation not only into food and drink in the Graeco-Roman world (c. 800 BCE to 400 CE), but focuses on ideas about food and its cultural significance in the widest sense, while also examining production and processing.⁵ Covering a wide array of topics from cereal, staples, meat and fish, to food and medicine, the volume aims at providing a ‘snapshot’ of eating in antiquity, acknowledging that “food and eating is a complex matter with complex associations”.⁶

Also addressing the complexities of food and drink, particularly eating and drinking, within a changing and formative social context is Grimm’s work on feasting and fasting in early Christianity.⁷ This study traces early Christian attitudes to food and drink, eating and fasting in the writings of the figures that shaped Christian discourse.⁸ Grimm argues that by placing antique texts into their intellectual, social and historical context it is possible to develop our understanding of the antique mentality.⁹ Thus, in seeing that body symbols reflect perceptions and relationships within societies,¹⁰ she argues that eating practices and accusations of unacceptable eating practices acted as a form of group distinction and segregation. This is an idea reiterated in several of the papers presented below.

For the period of the Byzantine empire there is some interest in the area of food and drink with the publication of specialist studies in the area, as well as the inclusion of the topic within broader studies of Byzantium such as that of Talbot Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium*.¹¹ However, there are still only a few Byzantine scholars who have devoted more than passing attention to the topic, the most prominent being Koukoules in the 1950s,¹² and more recently Johannes Koder.¹³

and id., “To Have and Have Not. Supply and Shortage in the Late-Antique World”, in the Acts of the Conference: Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (Cambridge 2001).

³ W.J. Slater (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991), 1.

⁴ J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson (eds), *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter 1995).

⁵ See Wilkins et al., *Food in Antiquity*, 2-3.

⁶ Wilkins et al., *Food in Antiquity*, 10, esp. ‘Introduction’.

⁷ V.E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, The Evolution of a Sin. Attitudes to food in late antiquity* (London and New York 1996).

⁸ Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 8.

⁹ Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 13.

¹⁰ Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 195.

¹¹ Rice discusses, for instance, grocers, the sale of fish and bread, and the ‘meal’ within her work: T.T. Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium* (New York 1967), 122-123, 168-170.

¹² P. Koukoules, *Byzantinon Bios Kai Politismos* (Byzantine Life and Civilization). (Collection de l’Institut Français d’Athènes, Athens 1952), Volume 5.

¹³ For example, J. Koder, “*Monokythra* and pasta: *thrymmata megala* in the Byzantine diet”, *Proceedings of the 2003 British Spring Symposium*; id., *Gemüse in Byzanz: die Versorgung*

Koukoules' work on Byzantine life contains two chapters on 'Food and Drink' and 'Dining customs',¹⁴ which discuss the type of food and drink consumed in Byzantium, such as bread, cheese, meat, fish, olives, cabbage, sauces, sweets and spices. Koukoules' focus is on what was eaten in Byzantium, when and how it was eaten, and its preparation (although in one section he does also consider the manner of its consumption).

Andrew Dalby has also proved a prolific writer on the history of food and addresses food in Byzantium in several of his works, particularly in *Siren Feasts* and his recent work *Flavours of Byzantium*.¹⁵ In the former his focus is on food in the domestic context and he looks at the things people ate in Byzantium, considering Byzantine food in its socio-economic context (e.g. the diet of the poor being limited and usually vegetarian).¹⁶ In *Flavours of Byzantium*, Dalby presents a study of a 'Byzantine culinary melting-pot',¹⁷ considering a social and historical context for eating and drinking and ideas of food, including various Byzantine recipes, and offering "an unexpected and useful access to the Byzantine mind-set".¹⁸

While several of the works above address food and drink in the sense of what was consumed, and how and when, such as Koukoules and to some degree Dalby,¹⁹ there is also a move towards understanding the role that food and drink, and its consumption, played within society. This volume follows this trend to a considerable degree, with many of the contributions highlighting the role and perception of food and drink, and its consumption, within Byzantine society. An example is the first paper by Simon Malmberg titled: "Visualising Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets", in which he discusses the importance of precedence at Roman and Middle-Byzantine imperial banquets. Malmberg reiterates the importance of status to Romans and presents a well developed argument for demonstrating the installation and presentation of this (no longer hereditary – and changing) hierarchy (and its respective power) in the development of precedence, and the physical expression of hierarchy at imperial banquets. Thus, spatial, temporal, qualitative, quantitative and behavioural distinctions are shown to have expressed precedence,

Konstantinopels mit Frischgemüse im Lichte der Geoponika (Vienna 1993); id., *Ὁ κηπουρός και ἡ καθημερινή κυζίνα στο Βυζάντιο* (Athens 1992).

¹⁴ An abbreviated translation of which can be found in H. Marks, *Byzantine Cuisine* (Eugene, Or. 2002), Appendix E.

¹⁵ A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Totnes 2003); id., *Empire of Pleasures. Luxury and indulgence in the Roman world* (London and New York 2000); id., *Siren Feasts. A history of food and gastronomy in Greece* (London and New York 1996); id., *Dangerous Tastes. The story of spices* (London 2000); A. Dalby and S. Grainger, *The Classical Cookbook* (London 1996).

¹⁶ Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 196-197.

¹⁷ Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium*, 27.

¹⁸ Reviewed by D.G. Wright, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (2004.02.34).

¹⁹ See also Dalby and Grainger, *The Classical Cookbook*; Marks, *Byzantine Cuisine*; and P. Faas, *Around the Roman Table* (London 2003).

and acted as symbols and enforcers of social hierarchy. Malmberg proposes that the imperial banquet provided proof of the emperor's political legitimacy, and that the ritual of the banquet enabled him to establish differences in rank and to distribute favours and displeasure, providing an indicator of the position of an individual within the balance of power at court.

The work of Anthoullis Demosthenous in "The scholar and the partridge. Attitudes related to nutritional goods in the twelfth century from the letters of the scholar John Tzetzes", highlights the role of foodstuffs in the politico-socio-economic processes of the twelfth century. Demosthenous, using the letters of Tzetzes, argues that the exchanging of gifts, which included items of food (often exotic), belonged within the context of cultivated – 'useful and reciprocal' – friendships and patronage amongst the lettered elite of the twelfth century. That is, in addition to the exchange of letters, the exchange of gifts (such as sweetmeats, partridge, etc.) acted as a symbolic pledge of friendship (friendships at this time representing alliances of power, political influence and wealth), thus serving not simply as polite gestures, but also affirming the friendship as one able to effect favours and serve personal interests. Within this communicatory context, food adopted a symbolic dimension in personal alliances, particularly amongst the lettered elite, in the promotion of personal ambitions.

Andrew Stone in his paper, "Eustathios and the Wedding Banquet for Alexios Porphyrogenetos", focuses, as the title suggests, on aspects of the wedding celebrations of Alexios and Agnes as presented in the oration of Eustathios. He sifts through Eustathios' rhetoric and discusses the orator's presentation of food and drink and its consumption through the two days of wedding banquets. Stone considers, for instance, the orator's description of the transformation of the hippodrome into a banqueting area, the thoroughfares filled with edible creatures, the arrangement and decoration of the tables, and even the disposition of chairs. Furthermore, Stone comments on Eustathios' treatment of the subject, highlighting the orator's often sarcastic overtones, and his effective use of imagery in his description of the banquets.

As one reads through the three papers which follow, it becomes apparent that throughout various periods of Byzantine history food and drink, and its consumption, could be used to differentiate an individual or a social group from the 'other'. In Lynda Garland's paper "The Rhetoric of Gluttony and Hunger in twelfth-century Byzantium", for instance, this is highlighted through the use of humour by the elite in the twelfth century. Garland discusses the use of food-related humour as both a form of amusement and an appropriate vehicle for abuse in the twelfth century. She acknowledges that social class and status determined eating habits and that this led to accusations of food abuse as obvious points of attack against political figures, especially when the food or drinks involved were thought inappropriately vulgar and uncouth. As a result uncouth tastes and food

preferences were frequently mocked, in order to emphasise individuals' lowly origins. Thus in the volatile twelfth century bureaucrats, the symbols of the Byzantine administrative machine, are depicted with undisguised contempt, and food abuse played a significant role and enabled a pointed criticism of ministers, delineating their status as 'outsiders'. Furthermore, Garland points out that humour and slapstick were an integral part of court entertainment, and that it is noteworthy that the obviously fictional elements in the Ptochoprodomic poems were written to entertain by dwelling on the vicissitudes of the narrator and poorer classes, particularly the narrator's hunger. Thus humour provided a mechanism for labelling the populace (and their food preferences) as the 'other', further distinguishing the court from the city's inhabitants – the 'outsiders'.

Also on the theme of using food and drink and its consumption as a means for differentiating the 'other', Danijel Dzino's paper, "*Sabaiarius*: Beer, Wine and Ammianus Marcellinus", argues that the use of the term 'sabaiarius' by Ammianus Marcellinus served to identify and ridicule what was seen as the 'other' and barbarian. The term 'sabaiarius' meaning 'beer man' or 'beer drinker' was used by Ammianus against both Valens and Valentinian. Dzino examines the complexity of the word by investigating the 'beer geography' and the diverging drinking cultures of continental Europe and the Mediterranean. He notes that although the consumption of beer was relatively widespread, the traditional Greek and Roman attitude towards beer, beer drinking, and intoxication was negative and it was considered 'barbarian'. Thus beer-related behaviour provided an example of barbarian 'otherness', enabling a negative contrast to the qualities of Graeco-Roman civilisation. Dzino argues that Ammianus' deliberate use of the label 'sabaiarius' highlights cultural prejudices (geographic, ethnic, and class-related) within the Mediterranean and Roman world. Ammianus' use of 'sabaiarius' in the scenario involving Valens, for instance, serves not only to offend the emperor, but also to malign his Pannonian origins. Thus Dzino proposes that in the word 'sabaiarius' can be read the oppositions of the social and political divisions of the late antique world.

Paul Tuffin's and Meaghan McEvoy's paper, "*Steak à la Hun*: Food, drink, and dietary habits in Ammianus Marcellinus", also identifies how Ammianus Marcellinus identified the 'other' through association with food and drink and its consumption. In their paper they investigate references made in the *Res Gestae* to the topic of food and drink, particularly considering its treatment within the narrative. Amongst other references, the authors note that there are plenty of remarks in Ammianus' history about the provisioning of armies, and his linkage of the availability of food (excessive, deprived, or moderate) with military behaviour. In addition, Tuffin and McEvoy address Ammianus' concern with food and drink as a means for judging the moral value of individuals and societies, thereby establishing an assessment of uncivilised and barbarian or conversely civilised and

Roman. At the head of Ammianus' criteria of judgement is dietary moderation in both the quality and quantity of consumption, making gluttony and excessive wine-drinking prime targets for criticism. Thus his respective descriptions are a notable form of social commentary, and are even seen, Tuffin and McEvoy argue, as a threat to the Roman way of life. Ammianus' description of different regions and inhabitants, such as the Saracens, Scordisci, Thracians, and Huns, further associates eating and drinking behaviour with the 'other'. Thus it is suggested that Ammianus' descriptions of eating and drinking provide an important point for evaluation, and the defining of both 'otherness' and the uncivilised.

Moving away from food as identification, the papers of John Haldon and John Fitzpatrick change the focus of the discussions to the distribution and provision of food. John Haldon, "Feeding the Army: Food and Transport in Byzantium, ca. 600-1100", examines how soldiers were actually supplied with what they ate on campaign, considering such aspects as weights and measures, times per distance for travel, and the mean rates of consumption of the provisions. Haldon determines the diet of soldiers in campaign conditions, the basic ration allocated to each per day, as well as the fodder and grazing needs of the livestock accompanying armies. He utilises the figures of the expedition of the Byzantine army against Northern Syria in 911-912, as well as comparable information on land-use and levels of agrarian productivity, in order to understand the logistical operation, that is, to gain some idea of where, and in what quantities, Byzantines produced grains, and what might have been available to support transient populations such as armies. Haldon also investigates how the required material was carried, taking into account, for instance, the types of animals required, the weights to be borne by them, and even legal considerations. From this evaluation Haldon establishes how far a given force could travel under different conditions before needing re-supply, and demonstrates that supplying armies with food was a complex operation, and a fundamental aspect of successful warfare.

John Fitzpatrick in "(Not sailing) to Byzantium: metropolis, hinterland and frontier in the transformation of the Roman empire" attempts to delineate the problematic that occupies an influential, though not exclusive, place in late antiquity's literature, loosely described as 'organicist, institutionalist and geocultural', by offering a restatement of the traditional story about cultural and institutional continuity between the old and 'new Rome' of Byzantium. Fitzpatrick sketches an alternative problematic, which he loosely describes as 'structuralist, materialist and geopolitical'. He argues that the key to an effective dialogue between 'geopolitical' and 'material life' approaches is a systematic acknowledgement of the central role of 'food economies' throughout late and classical antiquity. Fitzpatrick argues that continuous and changing geopolitical relations between metropolis, hinterland and frontier offer a more illuminating guide to the development of the Roman state than the conventional cultural-

institutional narrative. He suggests that a shift in focus from cultural trends in the Mediterranean to the geopolitics of the northern frontiers reveals a fairly clear trajectory leading towards a distinctive 'eastern empire' and ultimately to 'Byzantium proper'. He questions the veracity of the dominant geocultural problematic, citing its general indifference both to logistics and geopolitics, and to the positive significance of Rome's original logistical and geopolitical achievements. Thus Fitzpatrick argues that a different type of continuity thesis, making Byzantium the inheritor of a 'northern' (and predominantly military) late-Roman state is considerably more plausible, the transformations best understood by a focus on the shifting relationships between metropolis, hinterland and frontier in the trajectory of a 'northern' late-Roman state.

The final papers of the volume again change track, by addressing issues related to food and drink and its consumption within a religious and social context, as well as philosophical and supernatural belief systems.

Matthew Martin in "Communal Meals in the Late Antique Synagogue", addresses the question of communal dining in the late antique synagogue. In particular he investigates the disparity between the rabbinic prohibition on dining in the synagogue and the evidence (literary, epigraphical and archaeological) that indicates that communal meals were consumed in synagogues in Palestine and elsewhere up to the sixth century CE. He consequently argues that this phenomenon has significant implications for the consideration of nascent rabbinic authority in the Palestinian synagogues of this period. Considering literary and archaeological evidence, Martin demonstrates that people did partake in communal meals in synagogues, and that they may have possessed a cultic dimension of some sort, which he suggests is entirely compatible with a conception of the synagogue as an inherently sacred realm. In addressing the problem of how this tradition of communal synagogue meals may be reconciled with the statement of the Tosefta prohibiting eating and drinking in the synagogue, he proposes that the presumption that rabbis had an overwhelming interest and dominance in this institution and its traditions come into question. Thus he infers that the phenomenon of communal synagogue meals provides an important piece of evidence in support of the contention that rabbis remained a largely peripheral influence in Jewish society, particularly in Palestine, prior to the sixth and seventh centuries.

Remaining in the sphere of late antique Jewish practice, Susan Weingarten's paper: "Children's Foods in the Talmudic Literature", discusses the foods that were seen as specifically associated with children, from birth to puberty, in the Jewish Talmudic sources. Weingarten points out that the Talmudic rabbis were interested in every aspect of daily life in order to bring it under religious control, thereby providing an avenue for learning about the everyday food of ordinary people. Amongst the many references to food in the Talmudic sources, however, only a small proportion deal with food specifically associated with children. Weingarten

discusses dietary recommendations for breast-feeding mothers, suggesting that the list may be related to magical beliefs. She notes that there are similar sorts of prescriptions for the diet of pregnant women that are apparently related to sympathetic magic. Various recommendations for food for children are also discussed, such as babies needing oil and warm water, and egg and *kutah*, or the allowance that children could suck milk straight from the teats of an animal when health required it. She notes that other foods suitable for babies and children include honey, 'hasty bread' (*harara*), *qenobqa'ot* (a dry dough product that could be crumbled), milk, fowl and especially nuts. Nuts were particularly associated with children's food, serving as treats and toys, even being used as memory 'joggers' for legal testimony.

In Silke Trzcionka's paper, "Calypso's Cauldron: The ritual ingredients of early-Byzantine love spells", three particular forms of supernatural love ritual involving food and drink are discussed. These three methods include the use of enchanted apples ($\mu\eta\lambda\omicron\nu$), male love-lotions, and spiked wine, all aimed at instilling desire in their (predominantly female) targets. In discussing enchanted apples it is suggested that the enchanted apple, and the questions of a female's limited or unlimited control in accepting the fruit, as well as the relatively public nature of the act, provide an interesting area for consideration on the topic of sexuality and gender in the Graeco-Roman world. The second love-ritual discussed in the paper is the male love-lotion. It is noted that many of the prescriptions provide men with directions to make a woman enjoy sexual intercourse, raising questions over the nature of relationships and gender, both within and outside of marriage. Notably these potions seem to be an inversion of the popular portrayal of aphrodisiacs in the Graeco-Roman world depicting women as the instigators. It is suggested that they may have been intended for concubines, possibly as a form of 'counter-magic'. The final love-ritual discussed is enchanted wine, discussing spell prescriptions for men wishing to affect women through the beverage. Once again there is evidence for males seeking to instil desire in women. Given that this method required some degree of intimacy, it is suggested that the spiked-wine may have been used to increase the attention of a wife, while also raising issues relating to trust. Thus the paper notes that early-Byzantine love 'magic' as it relates to food and drink was predominantly orchestrated by men, who sought to instil or indicate desire in women who, it appears, were often empowered to accept their intentions. It is thus argued that these forms of love 'magic' raise questions regarding male and female roles, relationships, sexuality, gender and issues of control in the Graeco-Roman world.

Ken Parry's paper, "Vegetarianism in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The transmission of a regimen", presents the prominent 'meat-avoidance' groups of the Graeco-Roman world, beginning with a discussion of Neoplatonic thinkers, Neopythagoreans and Manichaeans. Parry notes that two select groups are

distinguished in both the Neopythagorean and Manichaean traditions by the kind of food they consume: the strictly vegetarian diet, for example, is reserved for the 'learned' and the 'elect'. His survey continues with a discussion of vegetarianism amongst various Roman figures, early Christian and Gnostic groups, as well as Buddhists and Jains. Examining the position within mainstream Christianity from the fourth century through Byzantium, Parry also points out that at the Council of Gangra (341 CE) vegetarianism was outlawed, as the avoidance of meat could become a focal point for concern over ascetic elitism and a cause of division among Christians. Thus Parry's discussion highlights meat-avoidance or vegetarianism as a form of differentiation between and within groups.

The final paper, by Athanasius Louvaris, titled "Fast and Abstinence in Byzantium", deals specifically with the prescribed diet designed for the benefit of Greek Orthodox Christians. Less scholarly in its approach, this paper is nonetheless included as an addendum to the other papers in this volume, because in its broad scope it offers yet another interesting perspective. Louvaris points out that 216 days of abstinence from meat and dairy products were prescribed in a year, arguing that the Church had included fasting and abstinence into the life of faithful Christians "in a rational and systematic way". Louvaris distinguishes between abstinence from certain categories of food and fasting *per se*, stating that the latter was specifically designated as a disciplinary measure in several canons of the conciliar Church. He discusses the system of the categorisation of foods, in accordance with the rules of abstinence and the partaking of food, which were gradually adopted. This categorisation included: meat; dairy; fish; seafood; and vegetables, legumes, and fruits. There were several significant periods for dietary prescriptions, namely pre-Christmas Lent, the Apostolic Fast, the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and the Great Lent. Louvaris argues that in addition to having substantially influenced Byzantine cuisine, the Lenten regime and other observances of fasting and abstinence had a lasting effect on the cuisines of regions within the Byzantine empire (e.g. dips and salads, and confectionery and pastries).

The variety of approaches towards the subject of food and drink in Byzantium offered by the papers presented in this volume provide the reader with a valuable glimpse into the importance of food, drink, and the consumption of both within the political, religious, and social contexts of the proto-Byzantine and Byzantine world.

Silke Trzcionka
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Simon Malmberg

Visualising Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets

A married couple invited two priests to dinner, one an Arian, the other a Catholic. The Catholic priest reclined on the right side of the couch, *in cornu dextro*, the place of honour. Since the husband was an Arian, he wanted the other priest to receive an even more valued position on the couch. So he relinquished the host's place *in cornu sinistro* to the Arian priest, while he himself reclined in the middle of the couch, between the two priests. His Catholic wife sat on a stool beside the table, an inferior position. However, instead of sitting next to the host as custom dictated, she showed her religious loyalties by sitting next to the Catholic priest.¹

This story by Gregory of Tours may show us the use and importance of location at table in late antiquity. Below, I will discuss the importance of precedence at Roman and Middle Byzantine imperial banquets. The reader will first be given an outline of the general importance of hierarchy in Roman society, followed by a section dealing with *haute cuisine* and etiquette. This is followed by a discussion of the more specific importance of precedence at banquets, and how a banquet hierarchy developed. Finally, I will examine the physical expressions of hierarchy at imperial banquets with special reference to the main banquet hall in the Great Palace in Constantinople, the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches.²

The Importance of Hierarchy

Hierarchy is especially valuable to organisations in communicating power relationships. It is not only used to exalt a person, it is also used to calibrate degrees of power within an organisation, like the precedence observed among the Communist party elite on the Kremlin wall. Each society makes the finest and most elaborate distinctions in the spheres which are most vitally important to it. The exactitude with which ceremony was organised matched the vital importance of

¹ My analysis of the text of Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs (De gloria martyrum)* 79. R. van Dam, *Glory of the Martyrs* (Translated Texts for Historians 4, Liverpool 1988), 103, has partly misinterpreted this passage in his translation, as the diners were clearly reclining, not sitting, except for the woman.

² For a more in-depth study of these subjects, I refer to my doctoral dissertation: S. Malmberg, *Dazzling Dining. Banquets as an Expression of Imperial Legitimacy*, Uppsala 2003.

rank to the Romans, symbolising the current distribution of power.³ The great interest in hierarchy during late antiquity can be most clearly seen in the law codes of the day, where law after law dealt with the details of official rank.⁴

Of course there were also those who sought self-fulfilment in turning away from the competition for central opportunities. Pagan philosophy or Christian monasticism constituted such alternatives. Arsenius, the tutor of Emperor Arcadius, forsook the opportunity to become a new Ausonius, instead taking vows as a monk in Egypt. But in turn this opened the way to other forms of competition for status and prestige. There were also those who sought the best of both worlds, like Themistius, who gained prestige both as city prefect and philosopher.

But why was rank, and therefore also precedence, so important to the Romans? The statements by Pliny and Sidonius furnish us with the Romans' own views. Pliny congratulated Trajan on the way in which he had preserved the distinctions of rank, since "once these are thrown into confusion and destroyed, nothing is more unequal than the resultant 'equality'."⁵ According to Sidonius, precedence was the means by which the best men could be distinguished from their inferiors.⁶ Hierarchy was thus important for ensuring that proper respect was given to those worthy men to whom it was their due.

During the Principate, political life had to a large degree been dominated by a small group of senatorial families. With the growing importance of the imperial court, however, the senatorial families had lost ground to a non-hereditary court nobility more dependent upon the emperor. However, since courtiers were rewarded with government posts, the senatorial order continued to provide the framework for these distinctions. Earlier the Senate had been an institution where important decisions were made; now it had become a place where decisions were manifested.

Since rank in late antique society was not hereditary, it continually had to be proven and displayed. Society was highly stratified, but also experienced considerable social mobility. It was this very mobility that made it so important to demonstrate one's own superior rank, which is why precedence occupied the late Roman court to such a degree. Once the court hierarchy was established, it was

³ However, this new trend towards autocratic society could in certain contexts and occasions be moderated by the traditional virtue of affability.

⁴ Chapter 6.5 of the *Theodosian Code* (*Codex Theodosianus*) was entitled "The order of dignities shall be preserved", while the entire twelfth book of the *Justinian Code* (*Codex Iustinianus*) dealt with the privileges of various ranks. The first preserved orders of precedence were issued by Valentinian I in 372 (CTh 6.7.1; 9.1; 11.1; 14.1; 22.4) and by his son Valentinian II in 384 (CTh 6.5.2), followed by the *Notes on Dignities* (*Notitia Dignitatum*) at the beginning of the following century.

⁵ Pliny, *Letter* 9.5.3.

⁶ Sidonius, *Letter* 8.2.2. Rank was also important because it entailed legal privileges, in particular release from curial obligations. Also, titles were much valued, and even used in private correspondence, and they steadily became more bombastic.

maintained by the competition between the people who were a part of it. Pressure from those of lower and less privileged rank forced the more favoured to maintain their advantages. Through pressure and counter-pressure the late antique court society achieved a fragile equilibrium, expressed, visible to all, in ritual precedence.⁷

Rank was gained through official posts and titles. But there was also an unofficial order of rank which was far more finely shaded, uninstitutionalised and unstable. It depended on the favour enjoyed with the emperor. These patron-client relations were crucial to the political system, but did not have any formal organisational existence or any legal basis. For the system to work there must be a means whereby people communicated their pledge of clientage to a particular patron and, likewise, a means by which the patron communicated his acceptance of that role. This did not take place through any written agreements, but by rituals of precedence. The court was thus held together by a hierarchy, with ceremony as a way to control the distribution of power and dependence. The creation of court precedence is an example of ritual not merely mirroring existing social arrangements, but actually creating them.⁸

It was through banquets, among other things, that the political rankings were given concrete form. Precedence at banquets can be expressed in five different ways: spatial distinctions (physical location of the guests), temporal distinctions (order of admission and dining), qualitative distinctions (the kind of food, drink, and setting), quantitative distinctions (the relative amount of food), and behavioural distinctions (difference in table manners).⁹ Among these, spatial and temporal distinctions were the most conspicuous ways to differentiate the guests at imperial banquets, while qualitative, quantitative and behavioural distinctions mostly were used to distinguish between imperial banquets and other kinds of banquets.

⁷ N. Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. E. Jephcott (Oxford 1983), 87.

⁸ S. Moore and B. Myerhoff, "Introduction. Secular ritual: forms and meanings", in S. Moore and B. Myerhoff (eds), *Secular Ritual* (Assen 1977), 5.

⁹ J. Goody, *Cuisine, Cooking, and Class. A study in comparative sociology* (Cambridge 1982), 99; B. Hayden, "Pathways to power. Principles for creating socioeconomic inequalities", in T.D. Price and G.M. Feinman (eds), *Foundations of Social Inequality* (New York 1995), 27; M. Dietler, "Feasts and commensal politics in the political economy. Food, power, and status in prehistoric Europe", in P. Wiessner and W. Schiefelhövel (eds), *Food and the Status Quest. An interdisciplinary perspective* (Providence, RI 1996), 92-98.

***Haute Cuisine* and Etiquette**

One division of Roman society was by the differentiated access to foodstuffs.¹⁰ The aristocracy developed an *haute cuisine*, which emphasized the special status of the elite, with dishes invented by specialists, a plethora of cooking books and several luxury laws, through which access to this refined culture could be controlled.¹¹ Discussion of this *haute cuisine* aimed at an elite audience had roots stretching back to Hellenistic times. The works of Athenaeus (ca. CE 230), and the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (ca. CE 430) are not on foodways *per se*, but food and food customs nonetheless provide the framework and much of the content of the books.¹² Dietary treatises were another aristocratic genre with a long tradition, represented in the fourth century by the works of Oribasius, in the sixth by Anthimus and Aëtius of Amida, and in the seventh century by Paul of Aegina.¹³

However, a new and purely Latin genre developed in late antiquity, first represented by the fourth-century collection of recipes that goes under the name of *Apicius*. It has been argued that this treatise was intended for armchair perusal rather than for use. But this is to ignore the language in which the book is written, for *Apicius* is one of the major sources for Vulgar Latin. Thus, it was not written for people of culture, or to be read for pleasure. Instead, it is written in a technical jargon with down-to-earth instructions for cooking. *Apicius* does not stand alone – in the fifth century it was followed by the recipe book of Vinidarius. The development of this genre indicates the increased importance of elaborate food, not for the sake of literary discussion, but for the physical display of riches. Late Roman cookery surpassed, in complexity and in sheer number of ingredients, anything of the cuisine of Greece or the early Empire.¹⁴

Although they dealt with food in dietary treatises and recipes, the Romans seldom described the food served at banquets in any detail, but they did make clear everything to do with precedence in the seating arrangements. This is because food in a banquet context was regarded as beneath literary consideration, whereas the seating was fascinating enough to be recorded.¹⁵ As the anthropologist Mary Douglas has noted, “The more that food is ritualised, the more conscious of social

¹⁰ Goody, *Cuisine, passim*; N. Purcell, “Eating fish. The paradoxes of seafood”, in J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson (eds), *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter 1995), 141. On socially divisive meals, see Pliny, *Letter* 2.6 and Martial, *Epigram* 1.20.

¹¹ J. D’Arms, “Performing culture. Roman spectacle and the banquets of the powerful”, in B. Bergman and C. Kondoleon (eds), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (New Haven and London 1999), 314-315.

¹² For a good introduction to Athenaeus, see A. Dalby, *Siren Feasts. A history of food and gastronomy in Greece* (London and New York 1996), 168-179.

¹³ Dalby, *Siren feasts*, 187-188.

¹⁴ Dalby, *Siren feasts*, 179-180.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the descriptions by Sidonius, *Letter* 1.11.10-12 and Philotheus, *passim*.

distinctions are those who eat it.”¹⁶ Paying strict attention to rank at dinner contributed to the social stability by reminding all the participants that they should know their place and be content with it.¹⁷ In Roman society, ideas of proper conduct at banquets were explicit enough to be written down in something resembling manuals of etiquette already during the first century AD.¹⁸ Etiquette is most clearly defined and strongly enforced in a hierarchical context. Rules on clothing, decoration, speech, duties, privileges and prohibitions all act as symbols and enforcers of social hierarchy, and etiquette is the sum of all these rules. It is a major force in the preservation of all types of authority, be it political, religious, social, or economic.¹⁹

Development of a Banquet Hierarchy

Hierarchy at dinner is usually enforced when the diners come from a mixture of social backgrounds. Contrary to the custom at Greek *symposia*, the guests at Roman *convivia* often consisted of members of many different social strata, gathered in one dining hall. The Greek idea of equality at banquets therefore did not apply to Roman banquets. Also, from the time of Emperor Domitian, the number of guests at imperial banquets had grown to more than a hundred, making the banquets more formal, depersonalised events. Statius makes it clear that he was too far removed from the emperor to be able to speak to him, but Domitian’s position in the room was elevated and prominent, since Statius had no difficulty in spotting him.²⁰

¹⁶ M. Douglas, “Coded messages”, in S. Griffiths and J. Wallace (eds), *Consuming Passions. Food in the age of anxiety* (Manchester 1998), 108. See also M. Young, *Fighting with Food. Leadership, values, and social control in Massim society* (Cambridge 1971).

¹⁷ J. D’Arms, “The Roman *convivium* and the idea of equality”, in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptica. A symposium on the symposion* (Oxford 1990), 308. For a Roman example, see Suetonius, *Augustus* 74.

¹⁸ Priscus, a contemporary of Martial, devoted a whole work to the ideal dinner party: Martial 9.77.1-2. See also Gellius, *Attic Nights (Noctes Atticae)* 13.11.1, and E. Stein-Hölkeskamp, “Culinarische Codes: das ideale Bankett bei Plinius d. Jüngeren und seinen Zeitgenossen”, *Klio* 84 (2002), 465-490.

¹⁹ E. Norbeck, “A sanction for authority: etiquette”, in R. Fogelson and R. Adams (eds), *The Anthropology of Power. Ethnographic studies from Asia, Oceania, and the New World* (New York 1977), 67-76.

²⁰ Statius, *Silvae* 4.2.15-18, 32-33; J. D’Arms, “Control, companionship, and *clientela*. Some social functions of the Roman communal meal”, *Échos du Monde Classique* 28 (1984), 343; D’Arms, “The Roman *convivium*”, 310. See also Martial 8.39.1-2 and the discussions by A. Winterling, *Aula Caesaris. Studien zur Institutionalisierung des römischen Kaiserhofes in der Zeit von Augustus bis Commodus (31 v.Chr.-192 n.Chr.)* (Munich 1999), 145-160, and C. Klodt, *Bescheidene Größe. Die Herrschergestalt, der Kaiserpalast und die Stadt Rom. Literarische Reflexionen monarchischer Selbstdarstellung* (Göttingen 2001), 56-57.

The presence of the emperor validated the hierarchy of all the other diners, reinforcing visually the ties of clientage. The connection between precedence and emperor was intimate. Courtiers defined themselves in terms of precedence, that is, the proximity and nature of their relation to the emperor.²¹ Because ritual traditions defined the hierarchy, the ruler was able to bring about changes in status simply by departing from precedent. As the emperor was the ultimate source of authority, a person's status could depend on being closely associated with him. This made royal rites into potent weapons, with the courtiers struggling to win symbolic expressions of favour. In Roman society, ritual was used by the emperor to establish differences in rank and to distribute favours and displeasure. It was an indicator of the position of the individual within the balance of power between the courtiers. The possibility for precedence, to sit while the other had to stand, or the depth of the bow with which one was greeted were not mere externals. They were a documentation of the place one currently occupied in the hierarchy.

During the second century, Plutarch could still write about "Whether the host should arrange the placing of guests or leave it to the guests themselves". Plutarch's father argues for seating the guests as strictly as an army, while his brother says that dinners should not be contests for social rank. Plutarch himself thinks that the preservation of order at banquet is the main reason for the host to decide the seating. This obviously applies only to a private setting, although about a century later, during the reign of Caracalla, we learn that the precedence was fixed by rule, rather than by imperial whim. A department dealing with precedence at court, the *officium admissionis*, was in fact known already to Suetonius.²² Even though it thus became regulated as to which *ranks* were allowed to dine at the imperial table, it seems that the emperor always had the last word in the actual choice of *persons* invited. At the coronation banquet of Leo I held in the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches in 457, the emperor chose his table companions,²³ and at a marriage banquet held in the same hall in 768, the emperor designated the friends whom he wanted to invite.²⁴ Likewise, the ninth-century writer Philotheus tells us that the guests of honour were chosen by the emperor.²⁵ Consequently, we may observe an increasing formalisation of precedence over time, but a preservation of flexibility in the emperor's actual selection of guests.

²¹ One example is the creation, by Constantine, of the rank *comes* (follower [of the emperor]) of the first, second and third degree, while the court itself was referred to as the *comitatus* (the following).

²² Plutarch, *Convivial Questions (Quaestiones convivales)* 615c-619a. We have a description of an audience of Caracalla in CJ 9.51.1. Department of precedence: Suetonius, *Vespasian* 14.

²³ Peter the Patrician, in *Book of Ceremonies (De cerimoniis)*, book 1, ch. 91, ed. Niebuhr, p. 416, ll. 7-15.

²⁴ *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 41, ed. Vogt, vol. 2, p. 21, ll. 3-7.

²⁵ Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 167, l.14-p. 169, l. 1.

In late antiquity, precedence had been so intimately associated with banquets that when Sidonius in a letter discussed clerical versus secular dignities, he used the banquet as a simile for ranking.²⁶ The shift from square triclinium to curved couch also led to a greater formalisation at banquets.²⁷ The host's invitations, the diners' seating-positions, the distribution of food and drink, even the flow of conversation, all served to reinforce the forms of inequality.²⁸ An example of the growing importance of precedence at table may be furnished by the fate of the early Christian communal meal, the *agape*. It was without role differentiation (everyone is host, servant, and guest), without status distinctions (even sinners are welcome), and without complicated preparation (just the Mediterranean basics – bread, fish, and wine). As such it was a threat to clerical precedence, and was forbidden by the church council of Carthage in 397.²⁹

Today, a guest is placed close to the host if he or she is specially honoured; the smaller the distance from the host, the greater the honour. This also applied to the Romans. Precedence attained its definitive statement when members of the court met their emperor. Everyone's status was measured in relation to his or her proximity to the emperor. This proximity entailed rewards in the form of prestige and gifts, while guests who were in disfavour could be 'put down' in what amounted to revenge by seating and serving order.³⁰ In the words of Christopher Kelly, "the status and importance of any individual or group could instantly be gauged by observing their distance from the imperial centre."³¹ In fact, the importance of proximity to the emperor was overwhelming. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the fourth century, high bureaucrats, military commanders and influential courtiers were known collectively as *proximi*.³²

The opportunity to dine with the emperor also had a direct political significance, since the emperor could, if he so chose, encourage freedom of speech and listen to advice from his guests. Without access to the emperor's banquets, you were less able to have a say in the government. In this way, banquets also contributed to the upward mobility which characterised late antique society.³³ The emperor's closest

²⁶ Sidonius, *Letter* 7.12.4.

²⁷ S. Ellis, "Late-antique dining: architecture, furnishings and behaviour", in R. Laurence and A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds), *Domestic Space in the Roman world: Pompeii and beyond* (Portsmouth, RI 1997), 51.

²⁸ Sidonius, *Letter* 1.11.10-12.

²⁹ M. Symons, "From agape to Eucharist: Jesus meals and the early church", *Food and Foodways* 8 (1999), 49.

³⁰ For an example, see the low seat awarded to Liudprand during his embassy to Nicephorus Phocas in 968, and the debacle this caused: Liudprand, *Embassy (Legatio)* 19.

³¹ C. Kelly, "Empire building", in G. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (eds), *Late Antiquity. A guide to the postclassical world* (Cambridge, MA 1999), 173.

³² Ammianus 14.11.1; 15.8.2; 30.4.1.

³³ R. Saller, *Personal Patronage in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1982), 142-143; K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983), 120-198. Sidonius successfully defends his

friends, his *philoï*, ranked among the few privileged who were consistently by his side in public. In the ninth century, they lay at the imperial table during banquets, and even attended the emperor's breakfast in church.³⁴ Themistius was immensely proud to lie at Constantius II's table during banquets.³⁵ This also applied to later centuries: a ninth-century biographer found no detail more revealing of the prestige of his hero's father-in-law than the fact that he daily shared the emperor's table.³⁶ Until the overthrow of Maurice, proximity to the reigning emperor was also decisive if one aspired to the purple. According to Michael McCormick, "The court had become more than the centre of power: it was also the best avenue to power".³⁷

Visualising the Hierarchy

The hierarchy at court was visualised through the seating at banquets in strict order of rank. The guests could all see each other, and, most importantly, they could all see the emperor. The participation of the emperor provided the foundation for the guests' rank and status, and visually bound them as clients to him.³⁸ By inviting members of the elite to dine with him, and feasting them in lavish fashion befitting to their status, the emperor was making a display of the high esteem in which he held his senatorial colleagues, bishops and other leading citizens. Also, who would be given the honour of participating at the banquets was made into a show, with an official reading out loud of all the invitations.³⁹ At imperial banquets, precedence was expressed mainly in five ways, three of them spatial and two temporal. There were no qualitative or quantitative distinctions in foodstuff or setting among the diners that we know of. There may have been behavioural distinctions, but these are only hinted at, never explicitly stated.

political position at an imperial banquet: Sidonius, *Letter* 1.11. Themistius influences Constantius II at table: Themistius, *Oration* 31.353a. Tiberius is reported to have been so impressed by a rather unknown guest at a banquet, that he promoted him to a quaestorship: Suetonius, *Tiberius* 42.2.

³⁴ Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 185, ll. 14-18: breakfast in St Sophia for the emperor and fourteen *philoï*. Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 167, ll. 10-14: twelve *philoï* at the emperor's high table.

³⁵ Themistius, *Orations* 31.353a. See also Libanius, *Letter* 66.

³⁶ *Life of Theophanes (Vita Theophanis)*, ed. Halkin, 4.31-32.

³⁷ M. McCormick, "Emperor and court", in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge 2000), 145.

³⁸ D'Arms, "Control, companionship, and *clientela*", 344. See the conspicuous position of Domitian at banquets: Statius, *Silvae* 4.2.15-18.

³⁹ Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 135, ll. 21-23; *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 14, ed. Vogt, vol. 1, p. 87, ll. 6-7. According to Philotheus, "The full distinction of life and the glamorous value of titles are revealed to onlookers only by the calling of the precedence which obtains at the splendid table and much sought after banquet of our most wise emperors". (Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides p. 83, ll. 18-21, trans. M. McCormick, "Analyzing imperial ceremonies", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 35 [1985], 5).

The first of the spatial distinctions was the way in which you dined. The normal way was to recline on a dining couch, but some diners seem to have had the right, or the will, to sit. When Martin of Tours attended the banquet of Emperor Maximus in 386 he refused to recline and instead used a stool placed beside the emperor's place on the couch.⁴⁰ The patriarch of Constantinople also used a stool placed next to the emperor's place when he was invited to banquets in the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches in the ninth century.⁴¹ Although we have several examples of bishops and even monks reclining at dinner, the erect position of Martin and the patriarch may have been due to humility. The habit of sitting at a banquet was usually considered a demeaning position, reserved for women and social inferiors.⁴² We can also recall the words of the New Testament: "do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited; then humiliated, you will have to take the least important place; take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place'. Then you will be honoured."⁴³ Another, perhaps more plausible explanation, is that the refusal to recline is a demonstration of independence vis-à-vis the emperor; in Martin's case also coupled with a will not to acknowledge the ranks claimed by Maximus and his dignitaries. In the case of the emperor and patriarch, their relative rank is not that clear-cut: in secular matters the emperor holds sway, but the patriarch is at least as important as the emperor in religious matters. A convenient way to solve this problem of precedence seems to have been for the patriarch to sit next to the emperor, thereby occupying a place neither inferior nor superior to that of the emperor.

The second spatial distinction was provided by the precedence observed within the couch. During the Principate, the place reserved for the host was the first place of the third, or lower couch (*lectus imus*). From here he was favourably placed to watch over the service, while at the same time entertaining his guests, since you always reclined on your left elbow. The place closest to him on the middle couch (*lectus medius*) was considered the place of honour (*locus consularis*), since that person could engage in conversation with the host with the greatest ease (fig. 1).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Life of Martin (Vita Martini)*, 20.2-7.

⁴¹ Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 175, ll. 19-22; p. 185, ll. 6-30.

⁴² See, for instance, Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 79.

⁴³ Luke 14:7-11. See also the paraphrase, adapted for late antique circumstances, by Juvencus 3.614-621.

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Convivial Questions* 1.3.619c-d.

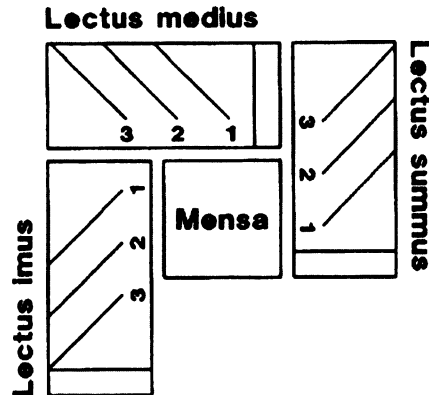


Fig. 1. Places at a *triclinium* (after H. Thédénat, *Pompéi* [Paris 1906], fig. 44).

This changed with the advent of the *sigma* couch in an interior setting in the fourth century. It was now equally important not only to get an overview of the guests on your own couch, but also on the other couches in the dining room, and to be able to be seen by them. The best place for this was ‘in the right corner [of the couch]’, *in cornu dextro*. Important to note is that the notion of right and left is always given from the point of view of the host, that is, the host lay in the left corner as seen from the other tables. Consequently, the place of the guest of honour also changed, to the left corner of the couch (*in cornu sinistro*). The host could in this way most easily communicate with the guest of honour, whose place gained distinction in this way as well. On the other hand, the arrangement is much less convenient for communications within the party – looking out took precedence over conversation within the group. Juvenius first mentions this new system in *ca* 330, although the older hierarchy with the guest of honour in the middle occasionally prevailed until the end of that century.⁴⁵ We are told that Emperor Maximus reclined in the right corner of the couch in a banquet given in 386, as well as Emperor Majorian in 461. Pharaoh is shown in an identical position in an illumination in the early sixth-century *Vienna Genesis* (fig. 2).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Juvenius 3.614-621. Josef Engemann identified the continued, if sporadic, use of the middle place as a place of honour: J. Engemann, “Der Ehrenplatz beim antiken Sigmamah!”, in T. Klauser (ed.), *Jenseitsvorstellungen in Antike und Christentum. Gedenkschrift für Alfred Stuiber (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 9, Münster 1982)*, 239-250.

⁴⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Life of Martin* 20.2-7; Sidonius, *Letter* 1.11.10-12. The earliest pictorial evidence consists of a Milanese ivory book cover dated to the fifth century. Clearly visible in the *Vienna Genesis*, f. 17^v, *Paris Greek 1286*, f. 19^f, and the *Rossano Gospels* f. 3^f, all from the early sixth century. See also the early sixth-century mosaic of the Last Supper in S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.



Fig. 2. Banquet of Pharaoh in the sixth-century *Vienna Genesis* (after W. Ritter *et al.*, *Die Wiener Genesis* [Vienna 1895], f. 17^v).

The hierarchy of the other guests then decreased from the guest of honour towards the host, the person with the lowest rank paradoxically being placed closest to the host (fig. 3). A passage from Sidonius, describing a banquet of Emperor Majorian at Arles in 461, clearly shows the hierarchical structure of the curved couch. The hierarchical order passed from the elevated place of honour occupied by the consul of the year, followed by two ex-consuls, then three lesser supporters of the emperor, and last Sidonius himself, being at the time in some disfavour. Even the initial conversation had to be conducted according to this ranking system, with the emperor first addressing the guest of honour and then saying a word to each of the others in order of precedence. An important detail is that even though one of the guests seems to enjoy a higher degree of favour than the consul, the emperor is forced to place the latter as his guest of honour because of his rank. This foreshadows the more rigid forms of the sixth century, where the placement of the diners is dictated more by formal hierarchy than by the will of the emperor.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Sidonius, *Letter* 1.11.10-12. See also Sidonius, *Letter* 7.12.4.

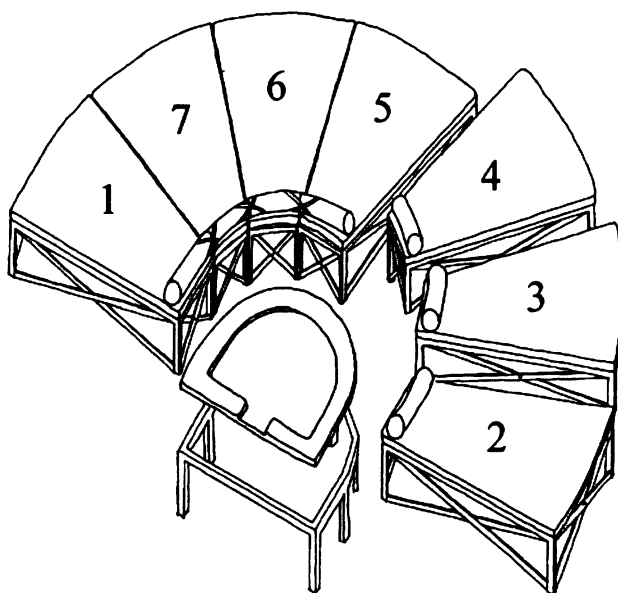


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of a *sigma* couch. The numbers mark the hierarchy on the couch. (After G. Åkerström-Hougen, *The calendar and hunting mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos. A study in early Byzantine iconography* [Stockholm 1974], 117, fig. 74.)

The third spatial distinction was the ranking system existing between the couches, here based on the circumstances in the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches in the Great Palace in Constantinople. Since all precedence was measured by proximity to the emperor, the imperial couch was naturally considered the most elevated. Indeed, this was also arranged physically, by placing the couch on a podium, thereby underlining its special character and making it prominent. The ranks of the other couches, then, were estimated by their proximity to the imperial one. Since the couches were placed in two rows in the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches, the first couch in each row was placed at an equal distance from the imperial couch, and so on. This problem was avoided by according the row closest, not to the imperial couch, but to the person of the emperor, a higher rank than the other row. In this way, the first couch of the so-called better row was ranked the second couch in the hall, the first couch of the other row ranked third, the second couch of the better row ranked fourth, and so on. Moreover, the first two couches in each row were often used for guests of higher rank than on the other couches. These two couches were often known together as ‘the closest couches’, while the rest of the rows were lumped together as ‘the other couches’ or ‘the inferior

couches'.⁴⁸ As for the hierarchy between the couches, we may also recall the words of Sidonius, that "the last guest at the first table is superior to the person who is first at the second table."⁴⁹ Thus, the relationship between the couches was finely graded, and, together with the precedence observed within the couches, made it possible for every guest to visualize his exact rank in relation to the other 228 diners in the hall.

The first temporal distinction was the order of entering and leaving the banquet hall. The emperor was always the first to enter and the last to leave. If the patriarch also attended the banquet, he entered and left at the same time as the emperor. In this way, their equal rank was preserved, in the same manner which prompted the patriarch not to recline on the imperial couch. Next, the guests invited to the imperial table arrived. They entered the hall one by one, according to their rank, and also left after the other guests. Finally, the guests of the other couches entered in two files, also according to rank. They were the first to leave after the conclusion of the banquet, except that sometimes the guests at the two closest couches were allowed to stay as long as the guests of the imperial table.⁵⁰ The second temporal distinction was the order of consumption. The only banqueters allowed to drink before the common consumption started were the emperor and patriarch, again stating their exceptional status.⁵¹

As for behavioural distinctions during imperial banquets, we have merely implicit indications. For example, Philotheus tells us that four choirmasters led the common chant during the banquet at the Feast of Light.⁵² Each master directed the singing of four couches, but this left out the imperial couch and the two closest

⁴⁸ See my more detailed discussion in Malmberg, *Dazzling Dining*, 91-98. See also J.J. Reiske, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, vol. 2 (CSHB, Bonn 1830), 871; R. Guiland, "Études sur le grand palais de Constantinople. Les XIX lits", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 11-12 (1962-1963), 95; N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris 1972), 164, n.136. The relevant passages in Philotheus are ed. Oikonomides, p.169, ll. 11-14 and p. 181, ll. 32-183.1; the closest couches: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 171, ll. 20-22; *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 26, ed. Vogt, vol. 1, p. 136, ll. 9-19. The other couches: Peter the Patrician, in *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 91, ed. Niebuhr, p. 416, ll. 7-15, p. 417, ll. 3-5; Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 173, l. 25; p. 175, l. 6. The inferior couches: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 175, l. 8.

⁴⁹ Sidonius, *Letter* 7.12.4.

⁵⁰ Emperor and patriarch: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 175, ll. 19-22, and p. 185, ll. 19-20; *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 26, ed. Vogt, vol. 1, p. 136, ll. 9-12. Guests of the imperial couch: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 167, l. 14 - p. 169, l. 1. Guests at the two closest couches: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 175, ll. 19-22; *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 26, ed. Vogt, vol. 1, p. 136, ll. 9-12. Other guests: Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 169, ll. 9-18, p. 169, l. 21 - p. 171, l. 10. The system of two admissions, as described by Philotheus in 899, probably corresponds to the first and second admissions (*primae* and *secundae admissionis*) known during the Principate: Winterling, *Aula Caesaris*, 119-120.

⁵¹ Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 175, ll. 19-22, and p. 185, ll. 19-20; *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, ch. 26, ed. Vogt, vol. 1, p. 136, ll. 9-12.

⁵² Philotheus, ed. Oikonomides, p. 187, l. 21 - p. 189, l. 1.

couches. Perhaps the guests at these tables did not have to participate in the singing? On some occasions, precedence was also consciously *avoided*, such as when an Arab embassy was entertained at a banquet in the Triclinium of the Nineteen Couches in 946. A round table was set up, in order that the legates should not think that any of them sat in a place of preference in relation to the others.⁵³

Why was this visual way of showing the pecking order at court chosen? The use of space in rituals is a very effective way to communicate status. Transmission of messages through ritual dramatisation is much more powerful than communication through verbal declaration. Everyone was immediately aware of the emperor's outstanding importance, placed as he was on a podium, resting at the right, most visible, corner of the couch. Moreover, all the guests could at a glance observe their own position in the system of court precedence.

A Quest for Legitimacy

In what way was the hierarchy important to the emperor? After all, he was the one who took pains to arrange it all. Ever since the time of Augustus, the banquet had been one of the most important ways in which emperor and elite met and interacted. Through the ideology and rituals that surrounded it, the banquet became a setting for the social and moral values of Roman society, and thus a way for the emperor to disseminate political propaganda. An important reason for the emperor to invite the aristocracy, and for them to attend, was the display of consensus. Through the visualisation of hierarchy at banquets, the emperor confirmed his self-image as 'king of the hill'. More importantly, the elite of the empire, by attending the feast, showed their acceptance of the emperor's position and acknowledged his right to decide the relative rank of all the guests. In this way the emperor gained clear proof of his political legitimacy.

⁵³ *Book of Ceremonies*, book 2, ch. 15, ed. Niebuhr, p. 594, ll. 3-14. The round side-table may have resembled the one described by Nicetas of Amnia, *Life of Philaretus (Vita Philareti)* 137.28-33, since at the imperial banquet it was especially set up to avoid questions of rank. Therefore, it is not likely that it was the kind of round table (*orbis*) designed for use with a *sigma* couch.

Anthoullis A. Demosthenous

The Scholar and the Partridge:

Attitudes relating to nutritional goods in the twelfth century from the letters of the scholar John Tzetzes

I received your gifts, both the spices for food and the beautiful tame partridge which is a great comfort to me in this severe illness of mine. It goes about the house, to and fro, full of pride, and with its pleasing cackle relieves my pains and makes me forgetful of my sufferings.

So writes the twelfth-century Constantinopolitan scholar John Tzetzes to his friend Alexios Pantechnes.¹ Partridge was a delicacy, but in this case the bird had been tamed as a household pet. Even so, the impression is created that it had been sent, along with other animals such as a lamb and some chickens, for consumption.² We see this again in a letter of the eleventh-century scholar Michael Psellos to the metropolitan Basileios Synetos who had sent him partridges as a gift,³ and partridges are included amongst delicacies listed in a letter of the twelfth-century scholar Michael Italikos to Theodore Prodromos.⁴

Nevertheless, Tzetzes reacts negatively, even snobbishly, to the gifts of Pantechnes since in his letter of reply he says: “whoever wants to make me eat meat should send me something cooked or preserved – or at least meat that has been hung and is not freshly slaughtered and full of blood.”⁵ Karpozelos suggests that Pantechnes’ gift was unusual.⁶ This, however, does not undermine the importance of his gesture. Pantechnes’ intentions, on the contrary, were the best, given that he sent the animals live to Tzetzes that he might eat the meat fresh, as then it was tastier. How then is Tzetzes’ reaction, which indicates disdain expressed as a show of refinement and sensitivity, to be interpreted?

The letters of Tzetzes provide information directly or indirectly about food. A letter to one of his servants who ran away and was selling smoked and salted meats in

¹ Ioannes Tzetzes, *Epistulae* 93, P.A.M. Leone (ed.) (Leipzig 1972), 135.17-22.

² Tzetzes, *Ep.* 93, ed. Leone 135.22-24.

³ Michaelis Pselli, *Scripta Minora*, E. Kurtz and F. Drexel (eds), vol. 2 (Milano 1941), 49.25-50.1.

⁴ R. Browning, “Unpublished correspondence between Michael Italicus, Archbishop of Philippopolis, and Theodore Prodromos”, *Byzantinobulgarica* 1 (1962: 279-297), 285.84.

⁵ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 93, ed. Leone 135.27-136.1.

⁶ A. Karpozelos, “Realia in Byzantine epistolography X-XIIc.”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 77 (1984: 20-37), 30.

Philippopolis speaks of the preparation there of these meats.⁷ Once again Tzetzes appears to show disdain towards this kind of food, but we should not regard this as reflecting a more widespread attitude. Nevertheless his stance is not unprecedented amongst twelfth-century scholars. Constantine Manasses, for example, when in Cyprus in 1166, was prompted to strike the person standing next to him in church because of the ‘unbearable’ smell of wine and garlic on his breath.⁸ This reaction accords with the clichéd image of the lettered elite as particularly refined and often scorning material goods. It certainly does not mean that Manasses would not consume wine,⁹ or eat garlic, or that Tzetzes would not eat fresh meat, which was considered a particular delicacy. The austere life of a scholar and his scorn for material goods constitute a commonplace to which Tzetzes yields with pleasure. It occurs again in his letter to Leo, bishop of Klokotinitza:

I shall say it, even though it might be heard as a boast: I spurned august dignities and, although almost all the princes warmly request me to live at court and to exercise power with them, I preferred to live quietly, eating dry bread and drinking a little water.¹⁰

Let us return, however, to Alexios Pantechnes. What is his reason for sending these gifts to Tzetzes? In the first place, it was in order to place a seal upon their friendship, but not for this reason alone. The letter that has reached us is a letter of thanks, since Tzetzes’ reply extols the sender on the grounds that, despite his many pursuits, he finds time to bestow benefits on his friends.¹¹ Most likely the gifts confirmed the positive outcome of a request. However, as I mention elsewhere, matters of self-interest formed the central axis around which a friendly relationship would turn.¹² We must, then, bear in mind that friendships at this time, despite the intensely emotional character of their presentation in the sources, represent alliances of people or of powerful families aimed at the reciprocal serving of their own interests. Socio-economic advancement, gaining positions that offered authority and money, were goals of the Byzantines because they would secure for themselves splendour, power, political influence, and, of course, wealth. How much friendship had to do with the serving of one’s own interests is evident also from Tzetzes’ letter to Constantine, bishop of Dalisandos. Tzetzes, to test how

⁷ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 104, ed. Leone 150.1-12.

⁸ K. Horna, “Das Hodoiporikon des Konstantin Manasses”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 13 (1904: 313-355), 344.89-345.130.

⁹ Karpozelos, “Realia”, 26-27. Michael Italikos, Theodore Prodromos, etc. liked wine; see Browning, “Michael Italicus”, 285.85-86. Italikos, in contrast to Manasses, calls wine fragrant.

¹⁰ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 19, ed. Leone 35.25-36.6.

¹¹ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 93, ed. Leone 134.11-15.

¹² A.A. Δημοσθένους, *Φιλία και ομοφυλοφιλία τον 11^ο και 12^ο αιώνα στο Βυζάντιο* (Αθήνα 2004).

eager Constantine would be to support him, asked of him a small favour – specifically he requested a book from him. Constantine fulfilled his desire and thus in his eyes was promoted to the status of a ‘true’ friend.¹³

As well as confirming a favour, letters and gifts could be used to renew a personal alliance. Tzetzes asks the nephew of the *protovestiarios* Lord Alexios to send him an aromatic called *phryganida*.¹⁴ Alexios belonged to Tzetzes’ network and Tzetzes had been persuaded that friendship with him would serve his own interests.¹⁵ The *phryganida* in its turn would place a symbolic seal upon the alliance. These were precarious times and in the correspondence of the twelfth century one observes the constant need to seek letters from friends.¹⁶ Certainly this could be just one more commonplace, but the repeated nature of the demand suggests a basis in reality, since to seek correspondence from someone with whom one is already corresponding would be illogical. Alliances could easily be overturned. The eleventh and the twelfth centuries are after all periods of questionable morality and superficiality in personal relationships.¹⁷

We know that Constantine Kotertzes sent Tzetzes a large quantity of sweetmeats. This gesture could be interpreted as an attempt at satisfying Tzetzes, since it would be the equivalent of the verbal confirmation of an alliance, conveyed in a letter.¹⁸ Similarly the metropolitan of Dristra, Leo Charsianites, sent Tzetzes three dried fish from the Danube along with fish sliced and pickled.¹⁹ Furthermore the twelfth-century scholar and metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates, says of a similar gift that he received from Demetrios Makrembolites, that it constitutes ‘a symbol’ and ‘a pledge of friendship’. This reciprocation, of course, has nothing to do with the fish that Makrembolites had sent him. Choniates, although he had lost his former power, given that the letter was sent after the capture of Constantinople in 1204, had started to become particularly popular and to gain the reputation of a saint.²⁰ Thus, as it seems, Makrembolites asked Choniates to become his children’s

¹³ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 83, ed. Leone 123.1-125.7.

¹⁴ Translator’s note: φρυγανίδα, apparently not found elsewhere; the plural was used by Eustathios of Thessalonike to mean dry twigs that were bound together in a torch (*Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem* 3.252.12).

¹⁵ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 29, ed. Leone 44.12-45.5.

¹⁶ Michael Choniates, John Tzetzes, etc. See indicatively Michaelis Choniates, *Epistulae*, in F. Kolovou (ed.), CFHB 41 (Berlin 2001), 91.1-93.55; Tzetzes, *Ep.* 3, ed. Leone 5.10-11, 14-16.

¹⁷ E. Limousin, “Les lettrés en société: ‘φίλος βίος’ ou ‘πολιτικός βίος’?”, *Byzantion* 69 (1999), 344-365.

¹⁸ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 68, ed. Leone 98.1-6; Karpozelos, “Realia”, 27.

¹⁹ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 39, ed. Leone 57.12-14; Karpozelos, “Realia”, 23-25. “The dispatch of fish seems to have been particularly appreciated at this time...” (J. Shepard, “Tzetzes’ letters to Leo at Dristra”, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 6 [1979: 191-240], 199-200).

²⁰ This is evident from the portrayal of Choniates as a saint in two churches in Attica only a few years after his death. See A. Orlandos, “Η προσωπογραφία του Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτη”, *Epeteris Etaireias Byzantinon Spoudon* 21 (1951), 210-214; N. Coumbaraki-Pansélinou, *Saint Pierre de Kalyvia-Kouvara et la chapelle de la Vierge de Mérenta: Deux monuments du XIIIe*

confessor, a request that the cleric accepted²¹ – the formation of partnerships with clerics by the ruling class constituting a phenomenon of the time.²² One should have little doubt that the role of items of food as gifts has, as well, a second level of meaning. Besides being a polite gesture, it is also a means of sending a vital message that the friendship is still in operation – that is, that it can still effect favours and serve personal interests.

The mentality that I have tried to outline appears much more intensely in a letter of reply from Michael Choniates to the metropolitan of Naupaktos, John Apokaukos, dating from after the capture of 1204. Apokaukos had sent him a gift of caviar and Choniates replies to him in distress that he does not know how he can repay the gift since he is “deprived of every good thing”, meaning, it appears, that he is deprived of any office which would yield him political influence, power or wealth.²³ Nevertheless Choniates had already done whatever he could for Apokaukos and the caviar had reached him as thanks for the fact that, in a period of ecclesiastical disorder, the former metropolitan of Athens, finding himself in the Monastery of the Forerunner, had seen to it that John was mentioned in the liturgies – a fact attested in an earlier letter of Choniates to Apokaukos.²⁴ In a letter that follows, it is true that Choniates will ask the metropolitan to help a certain noble, Doukas.²⁵ In the last preserved letter to Apokaukos the matter of Doukas is still unresolved, while Choniates thanks him for another favour that he has accomplished for him.²⁶ The guileless relationship that Choniates says he has with Apokaukos is in the end not so guileless.²⁷

A favour, as has become clear, had necessarily to be reciprocated. Consequently then, Tzetzes also had to support to his utmost ability those whom he considered his friends. In a letter of his, in which the addressee is not indicated, Tzetzes tries to satisfy his unnamed friend by assuring him that he has not forgotten him but is taking care almost every day to commend him highly to the patriarch. There should be little doubt that this was aimed at the professional and social reinstatement of the letter’s recipient.²⁸ Sometimes, of course, friendships were considered unprofitable when one party asked for more than the other. Thus the request of

siècle en Attique (Thessalonica 1976); G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates: Metropolit von Athen* (Rome 1934); K.M. Setton, “A note on Michael Choniates, Archbishop of Athens (1182-1204)”, *Speculum* 21 (1946), 234-236; I.C. Hill, *A Medieval Humanist Michael Akominatos* (New York 1973).

²¹ Choniates, *Epistulae* 243.1-244.42.

²² For a parallel case see C. Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The life, times and sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge 1991), 177-181.

²³ Choniates, *Epistulae* 270.13-27.

²⁴ Choniates, *Epistulae* 265.1-266.50.

²⁵ Choniates, *Epistulae* 282.15-24.

²⁶ Choniates, *Epistulae* 277.7-288.18.

²⁷ Choniates, *Epistulae* 278.189.

²⁸ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 52, ed. Leone 73.13-25.

John Triphylles, that there be prepared for him four copies of a document for the tax-collectors and one letter, did not succeed with Tzetzes since the latter deemed that, if he did this for everyone who requested it, he would end up dying of starvation.²⁹

The symbolic dimension of food in the alliances that were being formed mainly in the circles of the lettered elite is shown also by Tzetzes' letter to the patriarch Michael Oxeites (1143-1147). The scholar complains:

In fact you too feed, just like my Jesus, tens of thousands of people, not with crumbs but with whole loaves; some you load with gold and for others you secure the essentials. And only I am shut out of the circle of those eating with you at your table, who are utterly unconcerned about my person.³⁰

We conclude that those sharing the patriarch's table were those whom he favoured – since it is commonly known that people who share the same food at the same table have a close relationship. Tzetzes somewhat clumsily takes on the courage to ask in a direct manner to be included in the circle of those favoured by the patriarch and to taste of both his victuals and his generosity. The request will fail due to the death of the patriarch. The significance of the shared feast can be seen also in the correspondence of Psellos, who praises a certain friend of his for the generosity that he showed in the meal that he served him.³¹

Generosity in meals is obviously reflected in other areas. Semiologically food bears positive significance and the converse, that the absence of food or its replacement by something else bears negative significance, is also true. Tzetzes had a close, but apparently not perfect, relationship with the Monastery of the Pantokrator. When he asked those in charge of the monastery's stores to send him bread, they sent him 'dust'. Tzetzes considered that this happened because of the mean-mindedness of those in charge of the stores, who, as can be inferred, disliked him, and because of the indifference of the friends he had at the monastery – such as the superior, Joseph, and those responsible for managing the monastery's property, income, and expenditure, who made no intervention in this particular matter.³²

In closing, we would say that it has become clear from the correspondence that we have examined that gifts of food could place a seal upon social alliances and constituted a symbolic gesture. This symbolic gesture functioned more to confirm relationships that were entered upon in order to meet mutual needs, than to express spontaneously generosity and love. Gifts were not, however, an essential

²⁹ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 75, ed. Leone 111.12-16.

³⁰ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 30, ed. Leone 46.2-8.

³¹ *Scripta minora* 145.1-146.4.

³² Tzetzes, *Ep.* 99, ed. Leone 145.1-146.4

component, as is evident also from Psellos' correspondence.³³ Attitudes, behaviour, and intentions are not divorced from a spirit of opportunism, feigned emotion, and the serving of one's own interests. Furthermore, the texts provide evidence of a widespread mind-set among the lettered elite of contempt for specific foods which, despite their verbal disdain, in all probability they consumed. Their attitude was simply an ostentatious way of showing their disdain for the vulgar, the common, the material, and their crude presentation – something which is to be interpreted as normal behaviour from intellectuals who wanted to present themselves as separate from and superior to the masses.

Finally, it has become clear that, like everything else in Byzantine society, items of food are subject to a hierarchy.³⁴ At the top of this hierarchy were foods in high demand, the fresh meat of domestic animals such as chickens, geese, etc. Necks and limbs of slaughtered animals must have been delicacies, judging from Tzetzes' letter to Triphyllos.³⁵ Game, such as partridge, was always welcome on the table of the ruling class, while exotic spices would differentiate a gourmet meal from a dish simply rich in flavour. Fish had their own hierarchy: where they were caught, whether they were fresh or preserved, garnished with a sauce or not³⁶ – even so, fish was always much appreciated. Sweetmeats, too, on the whole were luxury items and enjoyed by the privileged classes.³⁷ Fruit, while more widely distributed, must have been no less a luxury. This is apparent from a letter of the eleventh-century scholar John Mauropus to an unknown addressee who had sent him pears as a gift, following a request from the scholar himself.³⁸ More common as gifts were cheeses and butter, as is evident from the correspondence of Psellos – foods, that is, exceptionally rich in fats.³⁹ In fact, as Kathy L. Pearson has clearly demonstrated, the daily diet of mediaeval people abounded in fatty and unhealthy foods which, over time caused various illnesses.⁴⁰ Far more common rather were smoked and salted meats, bread, wine and other simple foods.

As has been made clear, the use of items of food is not limited to their consumption since they also have a symbolic function. Besides being a source of pleasure, foods, as well as politico-socio-economic processes, are used in a highly skilled way in the promotion of personal ambitions. They contribute to a vivid

³³ Gifts are not always mentioned in the letters when someone is seeking a favour or when a favour is gained. See indicatively *Scripta minora*, 51-52.

³⁴ The topic has been dealt with in detail by Karpozelos. See Karpozelos, "Realia".

³⁵ Tzetzes, *Ep.* 75, ed. Leone 110.3-10.

³⁶ Karpozelos, "Realia", 23-25.

³⁷ Karpozelos, "Realia", 27: "A similar gift was sent by the Emperor Konstantinos VII to Theodoros, metropolitan of Kyzikos".

³⁸ The letters of Joannes Mauropus, metropolitan of Euchaita, ed. A. Karpozelos (CFHB 34, Thessalonica 1990), 121.11-28; Karpozelos, "Realia", 21: "The kind of gifts mentioned in most letters seem to be fresh fruit and vegetables".

³⁹ *Scripta minora* 107.5-22; Karpozelos, "Realia", 25-26.

⁴⁰ K.L. Pearson, "Nutrition and the early-medieval diet", *Speculum* 72 (1997), 1-32.

impression of the snobbery of a particular social group, while documenting attitudes related to personal taste and gastronomy.

Andrew F. Stone

Eustathios and the Wedding Banquet for Alexios Porphyrogenetos

It was only late in his reign that Manuel I Komnenos, in answer to his prayers, was granted a son to succeed him. His first wife, Bertha-Irene of Sulzbach, bore him only two daughters, Maria Porphyrogenneta and Anna, the latter of whom died young. However, his second wife, the beautiful Maria of Antioch, produced a son in 1169, who was named Alexios Porphyrogenetos and crowned as a toddler in 1171. The question of the most politic wedding alliances for the two surviving children was of prime importance to Manuel. Beaten in his political manoeuvring by Pope Alexander III, who recognised the rival emperor Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire as the legitimate emperor at the Peace of Venice (1177),¹ Manuel turned to the king of France, Louis VII, and it was decided that Alexios should marry Agnes, a daughter of Louis and his third wife, Adela of Blois.

The occasion of the wedding between Alexios and Agnes, now aged eleven and nine respectively, was so important that the main oration commemorating the celebratory banquet could be trusted only to the best orator in the empire, Eustathios, the archbishop of Thessaloniki.² Eustathios therefore travelled to Constantinople in order to greet Agnes as she disembarked from her Genoese ship in the summer of 1179.³ However, the high point of his sojourn at Constantinople over 1179-1180 was undoubtedly the wedding banquet, which took place in the Hippodrome. This was a double bill, for at the same time Maria Porphyrogenneta was to marry the young Renier of Montferrat, son of William the Old of Montferrat, a powerful marquis in north-western Italy.

The date of Alexios' wedding has been established.⁴ It took place on March 2, 1180. Easter was not until April 20 of this year, so this means that the banquet was a little before Lent, and such revelry would have been in keeping with the carnival spirit of that time of the year. The Eustathian oration celebrating it was delivered

¹ Other potential allies were signatories of this peace, William II of Sicily and Venice itself. For the terms of the peace see Romuald of Salerno, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 2nd edn, vol. VII/1, p. 279.

² For this oration, see Eustathii Thessalonicensis, *Opera Minora*, ed. P. Wirth (CFHB 32, Berlin and New York 2000), 170-181.

³ Eustathios, *Opera* 250-260. See A.F. Stone, "The Oration by Eustathios of Thessaloniki for Agnes of France: a snapshot of political tension between Byzantium and the West", *Byzantion* 73 (2003), 112-126.

⁴ P. Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken. I Teil. Einleitung und Text* (CFHB 12/1, Vienna 1975), 147.

two days afterwards.⁵ This paper will discuss some of the highlights of this oration, as edited first by Polemis,⁶ and then by Wirth.

The introductory passage, or *prooimion*, of the oration is of little interest. It reworks the much-hackneyed *topos* of the perpetual motion of the emperor (this *topos* was also applied to Manuel's father, John II). The variation that Eustathios employs on the standard theme is that it is the emperor's mental mobility, concomitant capacity for innovation and ability to think about a variety of subjects that differentiates him from lesser animals, which are preoccupied constantly with the same basic concerns.

The second paragraph (if we follow Polemis' divisions) is of more interest, if not significantly more original in imagery – it describes the emperor's recent distribution of bread throughout the empire, which took place, as we discover later, prior to the banquet, and was as providential as the rain of manna that was sent to the Israelites in the wilderness. To cite the key passage:

For recently (and I do not use the word simply for form's sake, for only a moderate number of days separates that time from the present) you were not only able to give us bread, to use Scriptural language, and prepare a table for us, your people (and you prepared it for the poor in your goodness, being divinely-possessed), but you also established this benefit throughout the world, surpassing the celebrated holy giving of food, and not even as in the case of the rain of splendid manna limiting it to be the luxury of a single people, but distributing it to almost all tongues, in the manner of a freely offered shower of rain, which you, the highest one, determine for all, tongues which have been scattered from among us to all the world...⁷

The way in which the rhetor describes the emperor's distribution of bread among the different races and languages that make up the empire as an even greater wonder than the divinely sent manna is typical of the hyperbole that the genre of imperial panegyric entailed. We shall come to consider this distribution below, along with additional evidence of such a dole.

Eustathios has struck some scholars, among them Kazhdan and Franklin,⁸ and Angold,⁹ as being a somewhat dour personality. Yet, as Polemis recognised, he was

⁵ See Eustathios, *Opera* 175/73, which says that the first feast was πρότριτα.

⁶ I.D. Polemis, "Ὁ λόγος ἐπὶ τοῖς θεωρικοῖς δημοτελέσι τραπεζώμασι τοῦ Εὐσταθίου Θεσσαλονίκης", *Παρνασσός* 36 (1994), 402-420. This was the first time that the speech was published. It was re-edited, with minimal differences (apart from those in the breaking up of the speech into paragraphs) by P. Wirth (Eustathios, *Opera* 170-181).

⁷ Eustathios, *Opera* 171/33-42 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 406/33-407/7.

⁸ A.P. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, "Eustathius of Thessalonica: the life and opinions of a twelfth-century Byzantine rhetor", *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge 1984), 115-195. Their opinions are less negative than those of Angold, n.9 below.

capable, as in this speech, of a touch of sarcasm. We find an example of this in the next paragraph:

And there was another time, when a spectacle similar to the present one fell upon our sight; but the present events have surpassed them by far. The byways were filled with good things, the thoroughfares were no longer viewed as ways for living creatures to pass through during the day, and received showers continuously of edible animals of every kind that it is lawful to eat, like a cloud of chaff, as well as with winged birds, like a pouring of sand, and all the other food that entices one to taste it, and the market place was full of joyfulness, and a place of assembly for those who were living sumptuously, and the place hallowed by those who contend in public spectacles (i.e. the Hippodrome) was another marvel.¹⁰

The sarcasm consists in pointing out the difference between normal circumstances, when living animals would be led or driven along the streets, and the circumstances of this time, when other animals and birds, presumably already slaughtered, were taken along the same streets to the banquet.

We might care to pause here and reflect on the way in which this fare, the flesh of beast and fowl, contrasted with the normal diet of the poor, for whom bread and vegetables were the norm, with perhaps the admission of fish into their diet. They would have considered meat or poultry a luxury.

Continuing in a sarcastic vein, Eustathios shifts his focus from the market-place to the hippodrome, the location of a contest of a kind differing from the usual horse-races¹¹; the contestants are the imperial stewards, running one way and the other. This is what is said:

And as for the place which is hallowed by those who compete in spectacles, that was another marvel. For what long ago furnished pleasure to the eyes now possessed sweetness for the sense of taste; or rather, it possessed both characteristics: the steeped seating on each side was totally occupied, since the people were crowded together there very densely, and the space of the race-track, which belonged to those who desired comfort, contained a contest of people, some running one way some another, as they did everything through which a contest was organised in such circumstances.¹²

⁹ M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge 1995), 179-196.

¹⁰ Eustathios, *Opera* 171/47-54 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 407/11-20.

¹¹ That chariot-races were still being held in the early 1180s is shown by reference to Niketas Choniates' disapproval of the boy emperor Alexios II's devotion to them: CFHB 11/1, 223. Indeed, the emperor Alexios III Angelos held chariot-races to commemorate the marriage of his daughters in 1199/1200: Choniates, p. 508.

¹² Eustathios, *Opera* 171/53-60 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 407/19-27.

The succeeding lines are of less interest to the literary historian, being a description of the way in which the tables for the feasters are disposed on either side of the Hippodrome, because the climate, still wintry, precluded total exploitation of the space available. Polemis, however, discusses the arrangement of the tables and the disposition of the hippodrome in his edition of the oration.¹³ The hippodrome's twelve starting-stalls were in its north-east part (for it had a hairpin shape, lying in a north-east to south-west direction, with the bend at its southern extremity), and its arena was divided into two tracks by a slightly oblique barrier or *spina*. This meant that the tables, which occupied the arena,¹⁴ ran from NE to SW on one side and then back again on the other. The majority of the people occupied the stalls on either side of the Hippodrome,¹⁵ although some (presumably those of high rank) reclined at the tables.¹⁶

Turning back to our oration, we see the reemployment of the image of a race in the arena:

And those banqueters were set around (the tables) in a curve as though they were at the starting points of the contest amongst them, and their race was directly towards the tables, all of which were swiftly filled. But the men who were collected from the squares of the city, and truly 'of the table', as one might say, were also in need of any crumbs that were there. For this is the way in which the good host of the banquet, which was the finest, arranged it so that souls that hungered might be filled also now with good things, and that he might satisfy the thirsting people.¹⁷

There is some New Testament imagery in this excerpt: the first, more subtle, is a reference to the moneychangers of the marketplace ('men of the table'), men with whom Christ saw fit to associate. The second is more obvious, an echo of the parable of the man and his wedding banquet, Matt 22:1-14 = Luke 14:16-24, as the succeeding lines show:

For also those who had been called and were worthy and who came into the innermost joyful celebrations of the Lord, had also received wedding garments from there (the place of the banquet), although there was another group of them without wedding garments who, due to their large and scattered numbers, could not be counted. These contented themselves with the wonder of what they were

¹³ Polemis, *Λόγος* 403. For the Hippodrome, see ODB 2, 934.

¹⁴ Eustathios, *Opera* 172/86 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 408/24-25.

¹⁵ Eustathios, *Opera* 171/56-7 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 407/22.

¹⁶ Eustathios, *Opera* 172/92-2 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 408/30.

¹⁷ Eustathios, *Opera* 172/70-76 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 408/5-11.

viewing, this being not limited to the crowd alone, but also extending to those who held positions of high rank.¹⁸

The remainder of the paragraph, as we have seen, is concerned with describing the disposition of chairs around the tables, and of the tablecloths and napkins for the banqueters. However, we soon find Eustathios back in his sarcastic vein.

The starting-stalls were then no longer passable for anything the size of horses, and were not fulfilling this function. Whereas yesterday and the day before they were a stable and a sty and an ox-stall, they were today a place for roasting and a larder for everything that luxuriously dignifies a swelling table. These and every other place were filled with meats which tempted the stomach, whole hillocks of them, great piles, full heaps, mounds poured like sand, providing toil for those who bore them; and then our place of spectacles saw a running and contest of mules which were not yoked to chariots in accordance (as an ancient Greek would say) with the custom of sacred contests, and were not drawing wagons or other kinds of vehicle, but were heavily burdened with loads for the tables alone, showing their endurance in providing nourishment and comfort for this finest of imperial occasions.¹⁹

This passage would suggest to us that beef and pork were on the menu.

The rhetor now changes the subject: he focuses on the imperial heir, Alexios. The standard description as a 'shoot of purple' introduces him as the topic. The rhetor speaks of the barley from Alexandria which the South Wind has brought to be sprinkled over the foundations of Constantinople (a reference to the old pagan rite; the passage is quite Homeric in its ethos):

And barley from that great city of Alexandria, which the South Wind greets, and then flows over the Pharian sea,²⁰ has been propitiously sprinkled and strewn over the earth around the foundations of this city, about which it is written how it has been set right, and those clever at predicting such things predicted here that the city would come out of many things with good fortune and truly become like a herder and nurse of men.²¹

It is very tempting, in the light of the earlier passage dealing with a distribution of bread, to see here reference to a shipment of barley from Alexandria to alleviate a famine in Constantinople. There were shortages of grain for bread (normally made from wheat or barley, sometimes millet) from time to time after the loss of Egypt,

¹⁸ Eustathios, *Opera* 172/76-81 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 408/11-17.

¹⁹ Eustathios, *Opera* 172/95-173/11 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 408/33-409/11.

²⁰ A play on words here: τὸ Φάριον is a double-entendre with possible meanings of 'the sail' and 'of Pharos'.

²¹ Eustathios, *Opera* 173/16-23 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 409/17-24.

the former bread-basket of the empire, to the Arabs in the seventh century.²² It was more usual for the church to oversee the distribution of bread to the needy by the twelfth century, but it is in character for Manuel, a prodigal spender, to have paid for a shipment of barley from Alexandria from the imperial treasury.

Let us resume our account of the speech. Eustathios next considers how the prince Alexios' imperial father has put a stop to war and created a 'boy-raising peace'. The adjective used here, *kourotrophos*, is borrowed from Homer's description of Ithaca (*Odyssey* 9.27), and used pleasantly here in the context of the wedding of the young Alexios. This is all the more apt when one considers that the crown prince has not yet reached his majority and that he is one of the youths who can benefit from this happy state of affairs.

However, the rhetor, now that he has mentioned war, introduces a contrasting image of a sacrifice of barbarians and a feast of the emperor's sword on their blood:

We have found you, and this countless times, O most manly emperor, setting up tables of a different kind, which are a joy for us, although in other ways such tables evoke great trepidation and draw in the spectator, and lead and cause him to cringe with fear, when, in your distribution of the flesh of the barbarians you bear your sword drunk with the blood of those men, and the guests who were present were flocks of vultures, who rejoice in feasting on such things.

And war provided those feasts, mixing bitter slaughter as a seasoning with pleasant things, and pouring a certain sharpness into the honey of rejoicing, and fear was mingled with our joy.²³

After describing this other kind of feast, Eustathios then reverts to the contrasting image of the present time of peace, and the cheer of the present banquet, showing that the literary device that he is employing is that of a clever simultaneous contrast and comparison between the actual feast being celebrated and the feasts enjoyed in the past by the emperor's sword.

The passage which follows introduces an obvious *synkrisis*, a comparison, between the feasts which are being celebrated and the Herodotean (3, 17) table of the sun of Ethiopia.²⁴ The point of comparison is that, first, both this legendary table and the feast are in honour of the sun (the real sun in Herodotos; the emperor in Eustathios, since the emperor is frequently represented as the sun in imperial ideology), and that, secondly, just as the Ethiopian table is miraculously replenished with meats, so too at these feasts there is an excess of meat, which the quieters may take away. A first mention is made of the Harpies here (of the kind

Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, s.v. 'Bread'.

Eustathios, *Opera* 173/34-174/43 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 410/3-13.

Eustathios, *Opera* 174/46-63 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 410/17-36.

that plagued the mythical Phineus), a theme that the rhetor will develop as his speech proceeds. It is not, however, altogether clear, who these ‘Harpies’ were, who were circulating amongst the tables and plying themselves with meat and bread, unless they were either those of lower rank who did not have a seat at the tables or the poor who were gleaning table-leavings.²⁵ This is an example of the opacity of the genre of panegyric and the Byzantine fondness for obscurity.

Eustathios next comments on the fact that the tables had been laid out for a ‘double bill’, and contrasts the celebrations made on March 2, two days prior to his oration, with those of the following day (March 3). Whereas, as we have seen, the first banquet was a festive occasion of joy, the second feast was conducted with order, silence and restraint. It seems that this second feast was not, as one would otherwise suspect, for Maria Porphyrogenneta, but, as the text reveals, for the poor;²⁶ the implication of this is that the first banquet was for the lay and ecclesiastical officials. There was enough food at the second banquet for the recipients to take away.²⁷

The passage which follows is interesting for what it reveals about Eustathios’ attitude to drunkenness and gluttony. Indeed, the evocation of the ‘stupid fool in Homer’s poem’ in the following excerpt suggests a *synkrisis* with the drunken Cyclops Polyphemos in the *Odyssey*:

And the edible things came first among all, and there was no one who was not loaded with those things in his belly and also burdened by them externally. A large number of them also spewed forth the wine like the stupid fool in Homer’s poem, of whom it may be said that they had been filled up to their very mouths. For the wineskins provided by nature did not contain their excess, but they cast forth the surplus.²⁸

This is not a flattering image. Eustathios continues, seemingly by evoking Homer’s ‘wine-dark sea’ when he talks of a ‘sea-voyage over dry land’, explaining the way in which large quantities of wine were served to the multitude:

This was the situation, and wine was present at both feasts²⁹ in a novel way, making a sea voyage over dry land. For seafaring vessels, or rather broad-bowed ferries, such as one might imagine to be twenty-oared, stood docked on both sides of the feast and their cargo was wine (sweet, like the symposium for which it furnished delight), which was not drunk in allotted portions, as the poem says,

²⁵ Professor Henry Maguire has drawn my attention to the fact that it is common for scenes depicting feasting in Byzantine art to represent Harpies hovering around the tables and feasters.

²⁶ Eustathios *Opera* 175/92-93 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 411/35.

²⁷ Eustathios *Opera* 175/95-96 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 412/3-4.

²⁸ Eustathios *Opera* 176/11-15 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 412/15-20.

²⁹ I.e. March 2 and March 3.

nor, in the manner of the cup of friendship, mixing the pure wine with water, but just as every one of those who were reclining wished it. Some were more prudent, those to whom it was important to be in control of themselves, and partake of the wonder of the affair, and to be able to contemplate the proceedings with their minds correctly and not be governed by their bellies alone; but others were more headstrong, those who needed only one thing, to go away more heavy and be loaded beyond measure, being served with what they desired by widening their stomachs as if they were barns.³⁰

There is a strong undercurrent of disapproval here. Eustathios, as a man of the church and therefore a proponent of the ascetic ideal, is adopting the moral high ground, condemning the simpler folk with their gluttonous response to the imperial bounty.³¹ Eustathios is probably evoking Jesus' parable of the rich fool and his barns (Luke 12:13-21); if you recall, a rich man, upon a good harvest, decides to tear down his barns and build bigger ones, only to die before he can enjoy the fruits of his success.

Eustathios concludes his segment on 'the fine thing, wine'³² on a prescriptive note. Although some may have become outright drunk,³³ and he speaks disapprovingly here of banqueters unable to walk in a straight line, at least there was no 'revelling to the point of madness'.³⁴

Polemis has already seized upon Eustathios' mention of the sculptures on display in the Hippodrome.

These tables do not deserve our silence, but are worthy to be sung about forever, indeed they should be commemorated by a monument more appropriately than those things that are also portrayed even now by statues and other things and figures from bronze or any other material in which the meadow of spectacles is rich and blossoms all around with shining adornments. This was a monument of imperial beneficence of a more dignified kind than anything else, than the Ithacan ship which the monster of the Sicilian strait plundered; than the impetuous Herakles who still stands out among all, despite his tribulations; than Athena, who is celebrated in unique myths; than Phye, who was dignified by enormous size and, so to speak, impressive appearance; than the charioteers, whose stately quality extended even to their whips; or the rest, those made from

³⁰ Eustathios, *Opera* 176/16-27 = Polemis *Λόγος*, 412/20-34.

³¹ Note that I have followed Wirth's text here, which reads ἀποθήκας ('barns'), rather than ἀπὸ θήρας ('from beasts'), the reading of Polemis, since I would not accept the use of ἀπὸ with the accusative in Eustathios' Atticising Greek.

³² Eustathios, *Opera* 177/42 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 413/16.

³³ Eustathios, *Opera* 176/41-177/46 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 413/16-20.

³⁴ Eustathios, *Opera* 177/48 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 413/22.

bronze and those that have been carved in stone by clever men, over which they laboured again and again.³⁵

The antiquities of the Hippodrome are the subject of an article by S.G. Bassett.³⁶ She is aware of three statues of Herakles, each of them portraying him engaged in one of his twelve labours: there is one with him struggling with the Nemean lion; one, by Lysippos, with him resting after cleaning the Augean stables; and one with him receiving the golden apples of the Hesperides. As the patron god of athletics, it was customary to devote to him tripods won from athletic contests. Bassett is also aware of a statue of Skylla. The reference to the rein-holders could be to the bronze *quadriga* known to have been located above the starting-stalls. However, the mention of a statue of Athena and Phye (the woman dressed up as Athena by the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos to legitimise his tyranny)³⁷ is interesting, and this speech therefore increases the number of antiquities known to have been located in the Constantinopolitan Hippodrome.

Next Eustathios craftily introduces the subject of the speech that the emperor delivered on the occasion of at least one of the banquets by comparing it to manna (to use a *topos* applied to the emperor's own speeches), saying that it was "sweeter than honey on the comb";³⁸ the listener naturally thinks the rhetor is speaking of the feast, even when Eustathios quotes the scripture "man does not live by bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3); then he mentions 'imperial lessons',³⁹ using the imagery of nourishment to describe the effect that the emperor's speech had. He elaborates in his characteristic manner. The effect of the emperor's speech was like that of Christ healing the blind, or the plucking of a pearl from an oyster. He winds up by making a comparison with the common meal of the Spartiates of ancient times (although their meals were accompanied by brevity of speech, unlike the emperor's banquets) and with the feasting of the blessed in the Elysian plain, before concluding with the customary wish for long life for the imperial family.

The two main themes that run throughout the oration are first, the emperor's generosity in providing such a bounty, particularly for the poor at the second banquet. The second theme, that of the way in which the emperor's wisdom has been revealed through his speech, is one which is a common motif of the period. Magdalino has commented that the 'guardians of orthodoxy', the Byzantine intelligentsia, found themselves having to praise the emperor for something that they were supposed to do best.⁴⁰

³⁵ Eustathios, *Opera* 177/62-74 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 414/1-15.

³⁶ S.G. Bassett, "The Antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople", *DOP* 45 (1991), 87-96.

³⁷ Herodotos, 1.60.

³⁸ Eustathios, *Opera* 178/79-80 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 414/21.

³⁹ Eustathios, *Opera* 178/85 = Polemis, *Λόγος* 414/28.

⁴⁰ P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)* (Cambridge 1993), 467.

The fact that the emperor displayed generosity to the populace on the occasion of imperial marriages, and the fact that this bounty and the earlier one of the bread dole were celebrated in a speech, shows us how important it was to Manuel, as a Byzantine emperor, to muster support among the people at large for his own regime. 'Bread and circuses' were not yet obsolete.

The most satisfying part of the banquet oration for the modern reader is that which employs sarcasm to achieve its effect. We have, however, seen other devices employed, such as the smooth transition from the subject of banquet, a feast of food, to imperial oration, a feast of words. The heavy use of *topoi*, manna, snowflakes, pearls and the like, are less well appreciated by the modern westerner; these were 'codewords' that, as they were pronounced, alerted the audience, who then waited expectantly to hear in which new permutation of ideas the *topos* would be applied. This effect is frequently achieved in western classical music, if the comparison is not too forced.

The speech made in response to the wedding banquets of 1180 was therefore typical of the genre of panegyric, yet with its own individual character, a piece worthy of the ex-'master of the rhetors'.

Lynda Garland

The Rhetoric of Gluttony and Hunger in twelfth-century Byzantium

To the Byzantines of the twelfth century little was more amusing, or more appropriate as a vehicle for abuse, than food-related humour, whether expressed as the struggles of penurious literati and inhabitants of the city to acquire a square meal or as the excesses displayed by emperors, monastics and prominent officials at the dinner table. This overwhelming interest in food and food-abuse becomes in the twelfth century a marked facet of both popular and learned literature, particularly when unpopular and jumped-up bureaucrats could be attacked for their culinary obsessions (often for the most unlikely comestibles), or the denizens of the capital mocked for their lowly tastes and their inability to purchase even the simplest of foods.

That what you eat is what you are is a truism in all societies, but especially so in one so preoccupied with hierarchies and social divisions as Byzantium, where social class and status determined eating habits, like everything else. While food preferences were always a source of interest to the Byzantines, it is in the twelfth century that we see a detailed appreciation and discussion of the eating habits of individuals or social classes and an obsession with what people ate, what they did not eat, and what they would have liked to have eaten. Comment on gluttony at court is, of course, not *unique* to Byzantine historical sources of the twelfth century, but it is in this century that the imperial court was generally criticised for indulging most freely in food and alcohol abuse, while the tone of the attack seems to express a new social freedom and delight in detailed critique of superiors, particularly when these are bureaucrats of lowly origins. Indeed, in the twelfth century the remarks of historians begin closely to resemble the insults and scurrility (the ‘fat cat’ sentiments) voiced in the streets by the populace – perhaps influenced by the carnival culture of the capital in which popular abuse and depictions of the absurd were endemic.¹ At the same time we see a preoccupation with what people eat becoming a prominent literary theme, whether the author is commenting on personal likes and dislikes or describing the habits of other groups or social classes. With the imperial court no longer isolated to the same degree as in the past, and the upper classes increasingly aware of the preoccupations of the populace, the scene

¹ See especially, L. Garland, “And His Bald Head Shone Like A Full Moon...: An Appreciation of the Byzantine Sense of Humour as Recorded in Historical Sources of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries”, *Parergon* n.s. 8 (1990), 1-31; and “Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade”, *Byzantinoslavica* 53.1 (1992), 17-52.

was set for each to comment satirically and pertinently on the eating habits of the other.

The preoccupation with specific foodstuffs may imply that by the twelfth century, at the upper levels of society, there was a greater desire for sumptuous meals (at times, of course, when fasting was not imposed by the church calendar) and a greater availability of different foodstuffs.² This was particularly noticeable when compared to the normal living conditions of the populace, or the abstention of monastics (the sin of Adam was after all the archetype of gluttony).³ Saintry figures were noted for their abstemiousness, like the Patriarch Euthymios, in the tenth century, who

during forty days...partook of neither wine nor oil, no not even fruit or vegetables, nothing had he to fill him but the priest's daily distribution of eulogies, and water twice a week.⁴

It is in the twelfth century that we learn from authors like Tzetzes about living conditions for the poorer classes in the capital – overcrowded apartment buildings, the dangers of fire and flood, and the problems with priestly neighbours who keep pigs in their flat upstairs, from which the urine drips through the floorboards – incidentally confirmed by the author of the *Timarion*, whose gluttonous aristocrat keeps two big, fat mice in his beard, “just like the pigs men rear at home, and feed on flour and bran”.⁵ The life of the working class inhabitants in Constantinople was hardly segregated, nor were their eating habits private. The narrator of the fourth Ptochoprodromic poem can both see and hear through the partition of his room the culinary activities of the sieve-maker's wife who lives next door, as well as smelling the meals produced by the wife of a neighbouring cobbler. In his perambulations about the city he encounters both a baker's and butcher's wife in the course of their daily duties, while in the streets female workers and well-to-do

² A. Kazhdan (in collaboration with S. Franklin), *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge 1984), 243-244; A.P. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley and London 1985), 196-206; on diet in general, see *ibid.*, 28-29, 80-82.

³ Nilos of Ancyra, *Tractatus de virtutibus excolendis et vitiis fugiendis*, II.iii-iv (PG 79, 820-821).

⁴ “Vita S. Euthymii (Patr. 907-912)”, 6, ed. and trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter, *Byzantion* 25-27 (1955-57), 41. On gluttony as the beginning of spiritual downfall see e.g. *Syméon le Nouveau Théologien: Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, I 73, ed. and trans. J. Darrouzès (Paris 1957), 61; *Capita Practica* 119 (PG 120, 668); cf. H. Musurillo, “The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers”, *Traditio* 12 (1956), 1-64.

⁵ P.A.M. Leone, *Ioannes Tzetzes Epistulae* (Leipzig 1972), 34-37 (no. 18); R. Romano (ed.), *Timarione* (Naples 1974), 18; trans. B. Baldwin, *Timarion* (Detroit 1984), 54.

housewives (χειρομάχισσες, καλοουκοδέσποινές μου) are asked to buy from itinerant tradesmen such as pepper-grinders and yoghurt-salesmen.⁶

In a climate like Byzantium, food abuse at court, like all pleasure for its own sake, could hardly be officially condoned. As a consequence, twelfth-century Byzantine writers, most notably Choniates, utilised accusations of food abuse as an obvious point of attack against political figures, particularly where the foods or drinks involved were thought inappropriately vulgar and uncouth (and perhaps had an obscene connotation). It is possible that this may be part of the increasing trend towards criticism of the imperial lifestyle and self-indulgent expenditure at court, while Choniates uses it to reinforce his central theme of societal disease that was progressively infecting the empire's entire population, rich and poor alike.⁷

But to what extent was gluttony a reality – or more of a reality than it had previously been – for upper classes in the twelfth century? Certainly banquets were a normal feature of court life and an integral part of the sophisticated demonstrations of social and cultural superiority inherent in the Byzantine court's entertainment of ambassadors and other outsiders, with the aim of underscoring the unique status of the emperor and his regime. Nevertheless, the historical evidence, if taken at face value, would certainly lead us to suppose that certain emperors and their ministers did take advantage of this to eat to excess. It is in the early eleventh century that historians, most notably Michael Psellos, begin to comment on imperial dining habits, though generally to confirm a character portrait. Constantine VIII's excellence in preparing rich, savoury sauces is noted because the emperor demeaned himself by acting as cook and creator of these gastronomic delicacies,⁸ and in general the glories of the imperial table are taken for granted, or described in order to underline some other weakness or incompetence. Constantine IX Monomachos, for example, whenever he went to visit his mistress Skleraina, had a table of delicacies prepared outside for his wife's retinue to prevent their

⁶ *Poèmes Prodromiques en grec vulgaire*, D.C. Hesseling and H. Pernot (eds) (Amsterdam 1910), 4.130-134, 61-67, 104-108, 233-239, 109-113, 114-129 (= *Ptochoprodromos. Einführung, kritische Ausgabe, deutsche Übersetzung, Glossar*, ed. H. Eideneier [Köln 1991], 3.198-204, 127-133, 172-175, 273.34-273.40, 176-180, 181-194).

⁷ For other views that the empire in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was 'diseased', see Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 7.52-9 (ed. and trans. Émile Renauld, *Michel Psellos, Chronographie* [Paris 1926-8], 2, 115-120), who sees the empire from the time of Basil II as a disease-ridden, festering body; P. Gautier, "Diatribes de Jean l'Oxite contre Alexis 1er Comnène", *Revue des études byzantines* 28 (1970), 35, 41 (cited by M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204. A political history* [London and New York 1984], 114); cf. Eustathios' oration to Manuel concerning the water supply and disease in the city: V.E. Regel and N.I. Novosadskij, *Fontes Rerum Byzantarum. Rhetorum Saeculi XII Orationes Politicae*, I (1-2) (St Petersburg 1892; repr. Leipzig 1982), VII, 126-131; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 229-230.

⁸ Psellos 2.7 (Renauld, 1.29). Psellos' description of him as 9 feet tall can hardly be taken literally, but coin portraits indicate that he was overweight: C. Head, "Physical Descriptions of the Emperors in Byzantine Historical Writing", *Byzantion* 50 (1980), 234.

telling tales.⁹ On the other hand, not everyone was like Michael VII Doukas, Psellos' pupil, who preferred a good book to a sumptuous banquet.¹⁰ And at this point good living is not necessarily seen as a failing, *even* for bureaucrats – when Leo Paraspondylos becomes chief minister under Theodora, Psellos, who disapproves of him as a “mimic of a philosopher”, characterises him as quite different in private life and as an excellent and generous host, who entertained on a magnificent and sumptuous scale.¹¹

In contrast, from the mid-twelfth century, such diversions become specific features of attack for emperors and their ministers, no doubt as a consequence of the military and economic disasters that were ravaging the empire. Life at court was luxurious as far as outsiders were concerned. Manuel's entertainment of Louis VII was described by Odo of Deuil: “that banquet afforded pleasure to ear, mouth, and eye with pomp as marvelous, viands as delicate, and pastimes as pleasant as the guests were illustrious”.¹² Choniates tells us that Manuel himself had a liking for savoury dishes,¹³ that his cousin, Andronikos Komnenos, himself modest in his consumption of food (apart from aphrodisiacs), kept his followers happy by tempting their stomachs with “the finest wheat...the fatted calf and...stronger drink of the finest bouquet”,¹⁴ that the *protostrator* Alexios Axouch, husband of Manuel's niece Maria, when forced to take to the monastic life and dine on greens and herbs, most missed his epicurean pleasures, especially meat dishes and rich sauces,¹⁵ and that Isaac Angelos “served up a Sybaritic table, tasting the most delectable sauces, heaping up the bread, and feasting on a lair of wild beasts, a sea of fish, and an ocean of red wine”. Isaac was in fact criticised by his brother-in-law, the Caesar Conrad of Montferrat, for emptying out dishes of carved meat and preferring eating to fighting.¹⁶

With regard to drinking parties and over-indulgence in alcohol, Kekaumenos in the eleventh century considered these the norm for the upper classes, though he advises his son to avoid such parties as a hotbed of gossip,¹⁷ and they are a notable

⁹ Psellos 6.55 (Renauld 1.143-44).

¹⁰ Psellos 7.3 (Renauld 2.174); cf. G. Kedrenos, *Compendium historiarum* (PG 122, 455) for the dreadful hunger (λιμὸς ἰσχυρὸς) which was one of the causes of his overthrow.

¹¹ Psellos 6.9 (Renauld 2.76).

¹² Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. and trans. V. Gingerick Berry (New York 1948), 67.

¹³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J.A. van Dieten, *Niketæ Choniatae Historia* (CFHB, Berlin 1975), 206.

¹⁴ Choniates 259 (trans. H.J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* [Detroit 1984], 144).

¹⁵ Choniates 145.

¹⁶ Choniates 441 (trans. Magoulias 242), 384, cf. 388, 427, 443. For his continued enjoyments of such foodstuffs, especially with God-hating monks (chasers after “royal banquets where they gulp down fresh and fat dishes”), after his return to the throne in 1203, see Choniates 558.

¹⁷ *Cecaumeni Strategicon et incerti scriptoris de officiis regis libellus*, ed. B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernstedt (St Petersburg 1896; repr. Amsterdam 1965), 4; see also 49, where

feature of life at court. Over-indulgence in such entertainments was considered the preserve of the vulgar and self-indulgent, and Choniates makes a vicious attack on the emperor Manuel and his *logothete* Kamateros, who was the world's greatest epicure and drinker and given, most inappropriately for a minister, to singing to the lyre and to licentious dancing to the kithara. He could outdrink foreign rulers, and his wager with Manuel that he could drink at one go a bowl of one and a half gallons of wine, which he won, coming up for air only once, demonstrated his own vulgarity and unsuitability for office.¹⁸ Manuel, too, in the popular mind, was obviously considered to overindulge in alcohol, a symbol of bad and rapacious government. After the disastrous defeat at Myriokephalon in September 1176, Manuel was brought drinking water from a stream flowing with blood, at which a rash and impudent bystander unblushingly commented, "Often in the past you have drunk unto intoxication from a wholly unmixed wine-bowl of Christian blood, stripping and gleaning your subjects", an insult which Manuel accepted calmly.¹⁹ Alexios III, too, according to Choniates, like his brother Isaac II, who daily feasted on an "ocean of deep-red wine", was devoted to baths and bowls of wine, while Isaac's son, Alexios IV, was not only given to drinking and playing dice but – worse still! – did so in the crusader camp.²⁰

When bureaucrats are shown by Choniates as indulging in food or alcohol abuse, their uncouth tastes and food preferences are frequently mocked rather than their greed, in order to emphasise their lowly origins and unaristocratic birth. On occasion, Choniates is not only depicting his own reaction to such ministers and their conduct, but recording the views of the populace – invariably snobs themselves.²¹ Such attacks are possibly fuelled by envy at court of the wealth and status of these ministers, though public opinion of certain of Manuel's officials, such as the hated John of Poutze, appointed to deal with the pressing financial problems of the empire, was generally low. John's stinginess and gluttony were bywords, his unpopularity being such that, on picking up a discarded horse-shoe in the agora, he delighted the crowd of spectators, and incidentally his own companions, by burning himself badly on it – it had been especially heated and placed there by a group of mischievous children. John's meanness was such that he frequently resold to shops (often more than once) prime fish, such as flat fish and bass, that had been given to him by those who wanted his good offices. On one

Kekaumenos suggests not giving alms at dinner time, but in the morning, in case people think you are generous because you are drunk.

¹⁸ Choniates 113-114.

¹⁹ Choniates 185-186. Kazhdan suggests that Choniates deliberately links the imperial colour purple with bloodshed or bloody murder (Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies*, 261-262).

²⁰ Choniates 529 (Alexios III), 557 (Alexios IV). Cf. Alexios the *protosevastos*' attempt to win over bishops against the Patriarch Theodosios by "gold and drinking parties": Choniates 241.

²¹ See, in particular, P. Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery", in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 58-78.

occasion, we are told, on his way home from the palace, he saw a bowl of food known as ‘brine’ (perhaps sauerkraut) set out by a female innkeeper, which tempted him. Despite the protests of his entourage and the fact that he had a far more appropriate meal waiting for him at home, he seized the bowl and gulped it down, greens, juice and all. His uncouth table manners and preferences were compounded by his meanness in paying only two obols for the privilege.²²

In a similar fashion Choniates attacks the uncouth John Kamateros, the *logothete* of the *dromos* (i.e. Manuel’s chief minister, in charge of civil administration). Kamateros – Manuel’s drinking companion – supposedly had a passion for the lowly green, or ‘broad’ bean (the *vicia faba*), consuming whole fields of them raw, and carrying off what he could not eat to his tent, where he sat down on the floor and gobbled up the remainder.²³ Finally Isaac Angelos’ henchman and favourite courtier, Constantine Mesopotamites, whose aptitude for trade and corruption endeared him to the emperor, had a passion for round cakes and melons (ποπάνοις ἐνελύττα καὶ ἐνέχαινε πέποσι), and “all the delicious eatables of the earth”.²⁴ Without wanting to stress the point here, a number of these foods – the *zomos* or soup, *popana* or cakes, and *kuamoi* – have sexual connotations in Aristophanes, as indeed does the gluttonous enjoyment of food in general, of which Choniates could hardly have been unaware.²⁵ The ‘green beans’ enjoyed by John Kamateros are a direct echo of line 125 of the *Batrachomyomachia*, and the readership might have been expected to consider the after-effects of eating legumes, especially raw, since crepitation is a favourite theme of Aristophanic comedy, often designating, as in the case of Strepsiades in *Clouds*, rusticity and vulgarity.²⁶ So these bureaucrats – the symbols of the Byzantine administrative machine – are in the twelfth century depicted with undisguised contempt, with food abuse often being the most significant and pointed criticism of these ministers of the crown and the factor which designates their status as ‘outsiders’.

In line with this portrayal of jumped-up officials, we should note that failure to appreciate sophisticated cuisine and appalling table manners are criticisms also noted of another type of outsider – the westerner or ‘Latin’ – and we hear a genuine cry of disgust at such barbarous tastes. While Bohemond, when invited to

²² Choniates 56-57 (...ἐδωδῆν, ἦν ἡ κοινὴ διάλεκτος ἀλμαίαν ὠνόμασεν, ἠράσθη ζωμοῦ ἐμφορηθῆναι καὶ τῆς τοῦς λαχάνου σχίδακος ἀποτραγεῖν).

²³ Choniates 113-115: ἤττων δὲ ὦν τῆς τῶν χλωρῶν κυάμων ἐστίασεως.

²⁴ Choniates 440-441. On Mesopotamites, see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies*, 227-235. He took part in an embassy to Genoa in 1188-1192 and was appointed metropolitan of Thessaloniki in 1196/7.

²⁵ The *zomos* enjoyed by John of Poutze (cunnilingus: Ar., *Peace* 716, 885), Kamateros’ *kuamoi* (breasts: *Frag.* 582), and Mesopotamites’ *popana* (female genitalia: *Eccl.* 843): see J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene language in Attic comedy* (2nd edn, New York and Oxford 1991), 145, 149, 144.

²⁶ T.W. Allen (ed.), *Homeri Opera* V (Oxford 1908), 168; Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 198-199.

dine by Alexios I, refused to partake of the exotic foods and cooked his own meat “in the Frankish style”, he did so primarily because he feared poisoning at the imperial table – in itself a sign of his lack of sophistication – rather than because of personal taste.²⁷ But, in the twelfth century, Eustathios complains that the Normans took no account of the Thessalonikans’ vintage wine (it was too sour): they preferred the new, still fermenting wine, and stuffed themselves to excess with pork, beef and garlic. Amongst their other failings, they also failed to appreciate the worth of the ‘noble raisin’, treating it with no more respect than burnt charcoal, while, in their view, rose water was no better than slops.²⁸ The ‘beef-eating’ crusaders, in their turn, displayed a mixture of greed, gluttony and ignorance during their occupation of the capital in 1204:

Carousing and drinking unmixed wine all day long, some gorged themselves on delicacies, while others ate of their native food: chine of oxen cooked in cauldrons, chunks of pickled hog boiled with ground beans, and a pungent garlic sauce mixed with other seasonings.

These uncouth preferences – love of pork, garlic and undiluted wine – were only compounded by their failure to distinguish between sacred and profane vessels in their drinking, and Choniates criticises them for their “undiscriminating eye and insatiable belly”.²⁹

For the educated, on the other hand, in the twelfth century, it becomes acceptable not simply to enjoy one’s food, but to make it an item of literary discourse. Two of Michael Italikos’ letters to Prodromos from Philippopolis concern food, one making fun of Prodromos for preferring bacon to cheese, while, in another letter to an unnamed correspondent thanking him for the gift of some small fish, Michael includes his preferred recipe (a drop of oil, thyme, and dried mint).³⁰ The patriarch Eustathios, too, wrote a eulogy on a new type of fowl.³¹ Both likes and dislikes are expressed. In a complaint to Eustathios about the hardships of life in Bulgaria, Gregory Antiochos particularly focuses his attack on the wine and food (the bread is made from millet and bran, not fully baked, and covered in ash; the wine rots the stomach; the smoked fish is mouldy; the fresh fish covered in slime; and the cheese stinks of goat). A further letter dwells on a journey, where

²⁷ Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 10.11.3-4, ed. and trans. Bernard Leib, *Anne Comnène, Alexiade* (Paris 1937-1945; repr. 1967), 2, 232.

²⁸ Eustathios 136, 139, ed. and trans. John R. Melville Jones, *Eustathios of Thessaloniki. The capture of Thessaloniki* (Canberra 1988), 148, 150; for the Normans’ repulsive personal habits, see also Choniates 304-05.

²⁹ Choniates 594 (trans. Magoulias 327), 602.

³⁰ P. Gautier, *Michel Italikos: Letters et discours* (Paris 1972), nos 1, 42, 19; B. Baldwin, “Classicism, Content, and Contemporaneity in Michael Italicus”, *Byzantion* 60 (1990), 109-115.

³¹ *Eustathii Opuscula*, ed. G.L.F. Tafel (Frankfurt 1932; repr. Amsterdam 1964), 311.42-56, 80-93.

there was insufficient to eat or drink and the bread was like swallowing cobblestones.³² Again, we have here the reinforcement of Byzantine cultural superiority through focus on the food preferences of others, a standard *topos* reminding the reader of Liudprand's earlier remarks on the horrors of Byzantine food.³³ In terms greatly reminiscent of the narrator's complaints of hunger and preoccupation with food in the Ptochoprodromic poems, Gregory, though a high-ranking bureaucrat and imperial secretary, bemoans his poverty and destitution and his inability to feed and care properly for his children and father. His poverty is hardly 'abject' – rather, he is employing a typical *topos* of 'complaint literature', failure to acquire a living wage and appropriate living conditions, which should warn us against taking his own account and those of other 'starving scholars' too literally.

Gluttony had always been a suitable subject for humour, with its roots in the Aristophanic comedy so beloved of educated Byzantines, and this reaches a peak in the mid to late twelfth century, where we have extended pieces where gluttony, or the desire to eat to excess, is one of the predominant themes – the *Timarion* and the works of Ptochoprodromos. This emphasis is unique to the twelfth century. A very large proportion of the humour in the *Timarion* relates to food and food abuse: "corruption and gluttony in high places are exposed throughout".³⁴ The characters (alive or recently dead), whom the narrator meets in the underworld, include Timarion's old tutor Theodore of Smyrna, who had lavished his royal *honoraria* on "extravagant banquets and sybaritic dinners", resulting in his present state of gout, and an unnamed aristocrat who is shown guzzling from a pot "full of salt pork and Phrygian cabbage, all drenched with fat" (the mice who live in his beard clean up the traces from his chin). Characters in the underworld spend much of their time obsessively discussing the foods they had enjoyed in the upper world and their current market price: "mackerel, tuna fish and little sprats, oil, wine, corn, all that stuff, and the most important thing of all, sardines – they were my favourite food up on earth, even more than pike", while Theodore of Smyrna's demand for a gift from the upper world clearly demonstrates Byzantine culinary tastes:

My boy, please send me a five-month-old lamb, two three-year old hens that have been fattened and slaughtered, the kind the poulterers sell in the market, I

³² J. Darrouzès, "Deux lettres de Grégoire Antiochos écrites de Bulgarie vers 1173", *Byzantinoslavica* 23 (1962), 276-284, 24 (1963), 65-86; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies*, 196-206, 219-20, cf. 252-253. For the theme of food in Byzantine letters, see A. Karpozelos, "Realia in Byzantine Epistolography X-XII Centuries", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 77 (1984), 20-35.

³³ According to Liudprand, the imperial dinner was foul and disgusting, washed down with oil and moistened with an exceedingly bad fish liquor: *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, ch. 20, in J. Becker (ed.), *Die Werke Liutprands von Cremona* (Hannover and Leipzig 1915), 186.

³⁴ M. Alexiou, "Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: A Stylistic Analysis of the *Timarion* (ch. 6-10)", *BMGS* 8 (1982/3), 31.

mean the kind that good butchers have removed the stomach fat from and laid it across their thighs on the outside, and a one-month-old sucking pig and a nice fat and fleshy sow's belly,

and the work ends with Timarion's trying to find a new corpse ("one of those filthy Paphlagonians from the market who will see a profit for himself in being sent down to Hades with some pork") to act as carrier.³⁵

The Ptochoprodromic poems also deal very intimately with food³⁶ – and the lack of it, which, together with the interwoven obscenity, is where the humour of the genre lies. But for what audience was this type of humour intended?

Humour and slapstick were an integral part of court entertainment. Within the Byzantine court, and presumably in wealthy households too, mimes, or professional jesters, were the source of orchestrated humour, expected or obliged to make fun of all at court, not even excepting the emperor and members of the imperial family. There is plentiful evidence for mimes at court – specifically for their entertainment of guests at the imperial dinner table, and the fact that Leo VI and Isaac Angelos both had numerous mimes implies the simultaneous existence of quite a number of such professionals.³⁷ It might also be significant that, during the twelfth century, as court ceremonies become less gender-specific, women, both women of the imperial family and members of the demi-monde (courtesans *et al.*) were present at the regular dinner-table in the palace, and could be the subject of jokes there, as in the mime Chalivoures' well-known pun on Isaac Angelos' request for the salt (*halas*), which the jester pretended to understand as other women (*allas*).³⁸

This perhaps gives us a context for the reception of the Ptochoprodromic poems. Narrated from various contradictory stances, the assumption of poverty and hunger in all cases clearly allows the poet/narrator to play on a type of humorous situation in which he entertains his audience by poking fun at his own series of predicaments. Despite the fictional constructions of identity within these poems, they provide valuable perceptions of the humorous in twelfth-century Constantinople: poverty-stricken husbands who can obtain a decent meal only by dressing up in disguise or raiding the pantry, scholars treated with contempt by

³⁵ *Timarion* 17–19, 21, 24, 36, 46, 47 (trans. Baldwin, 56, 75, 76).

³⁶ M. Alexiou, "The Poverty of Ecriture and the Craft of Writing: towards a reappraisal of the Prodromic poems", *BMGS* 10 (1986), 16: "Much reference has been made by commentators to our author's obsessional attention to what everyone has to eat...the remark is a worn *topos* of Prodromic commentary"; cf. R. Beaton, "The Rhetoric of Poverty; the Lives and Opinions of Theodore Prodromos", *BMGS* 11 (1987), 1–28.

³⁷ *Vita S. Euthymii* 48–49; Choniates 441.

³⁸ Choniates 441–442: "once at dinner Isaac said, 'Bring me salt [*halas*]'. Standing nearby admiring the dance of the women made up of the emperor's concubines and kinswomen was Chalivoures, the wittiest of the mimes, who retorted, 'Let us first come to know these, O Emperor, and then command others [*allas*] to be brought in'" (trans. Magoulias 242).

saleswomen who ignore them or refuse to give them the food they are begging for – often with obscene connotations thrown in for good measure.³⁹ These texts, though presenting themselves in the guise of begging poems, are not – they have an obvious sub-text as entertainment. Certainly these poems were intended for oral delivery: the narrator in the first poem asks John II to listen to what he writes (ἄκουσον ἄπερ ὁ τάλας γράφω).⁴⁰ And bearing in mind that even diplomatic and ‘private’ letters were read aloud to a *theatron* or court circle,⁴¹ it seems more than likely that they were specifically intended for performance at court – a court which was used to being amused by professional jesting and slapstick, especially while at dinner. Indeed the nature of the audience, and their expectations of entertainment, may have helped to determine the content and presentation of the humour, which the narrator actually pretends to request his audience to *ignore* (κἄν φαίνωμαι...γελῶν ὁμοῦ καὶ παίζων).⁴²

There are obvious fictional elements in these pieces and they are written to entertain by dwelling on the vicissitudes of the narrator and the poorer classes as a whole. Whatever the narrator’s fictional identity – downtrodden husband, penurious priest with a numerous family, unfortunate monk, or unemployed scholar with a pantry filled with useless papers – each episode focuses on the narrator’s hunger, with occasional ‘happy endings’ through the use of cunning and duplicity. In the first Ptochoprodromic poem the wife is supposedly a ‘Matzoukina’, a member of a well-known bureaucratic family,⁴³ married to a pauper, who regrets her lowly marriage, complains about his origins and the decrepit state of their house (apparently part of her dowry), and invariably keeps him locked out of the larder. His arrival home is a signal for the wife to load him with recriminations as to how hard she works for the family, and lock herself in her room without feeding him. She is finally outwitted by the narrator, who gets a meal by stealing the house keys and getting into the pantry when one of his children has a serious fall off the house roof.⁴⁴ On the following day he comes to the door dressed up as a Slav

³⁹ M. Alexiou, “Ploys of Performance: games and play in the Ptochoprodromic poems”, *DOP* 53 (1999), 91–109.

⁴⁰ *Ptochoprodromika* 1.14.

⁴¹ For example, in seven of the 68 letters in his correspondence (*Letters* 9, 24, 27, 32, 34, 44, 61) Manuel II Palaiologos compliments his correspondents on the applause their letters received when read out at court: *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis (Washington DC 1977).

⁴² *Ptochoprodromika* 1.15. Despite the fictional constructions of identity within these poems, they provide valuable details of life in twelfth-century Constantinopolitan life: see N. Oikonomides, “The Contents of the Byzantine Home, Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries”, *DOP* 44 (1990), 205–214; C. Bouras, “Houses in Byzantium”, *Δέλτιον τῆς ἐταιρείας ἑλληνικῆς* 11 (1982–1983), 1–25.

⁴³ *Ptochoprodromika* 1.70; cf. N. Oikonomides, “Ματζουκίνα-Ματζούκτος in Ptochoprodromos”, *Φιλέλλην. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (Venice 1996), 315–319.

⁴⁴ *Ptochoprodromika* 1.138–152, 206–218.

beggar, whereupon his wife (who does not recognise him in disguise) invites him in and gives him a square meal (a bowl of soup with some good pieces of meat in it) – the theme of the poem being that he will die from this ill-treatment unless the emperor, John II, helps him:

I would far rather, lord, they buried me alive,
and put me in the earth, and dug me into it,
than she should learn of what has just been written.⁴⁵

Sometimes, as here, the narrator has a momentary success, as for example in poem 4, where the underdog triumphs by cheating himself into a good meal in a monastery, blaming the food's disappearance on the cat.⁴⁶ Sometimes the narrator stays hungry, pathetic and an object of ridicule – the second poem, addressed to a *sevastokrator*, presents the narrator as an unhappy father of thirteen, and focuses on his inability to feed them: indeed, the family are reduced to eating their own clothes.

In a splendid example of *double-entendre* in the fourth poem, addressed to the Emperor Manuel, we hear of encounters with retail sales-women by the narrator in the guise of a poor scholar who has spent all day in the streets with nothing to eat or drink, when he notices a baker's wife chewing on the end of a loaf of some "fine white (semolina-flour) bread". When he asks for a slice she does not even deign to reply.⁴⁷ He then follows his nose to a butcher's, where "some fine pieces of meat were roasting on the fire". After he has flattered the butcher's wife, she invites him to sit down and promises a meal, but when it is placed in front of him it proves to be belly-meat stuffed with excrement (*σκατωτῆ λαπάραν*) which she throws into his face.⁴⁸ As noted by Alexiou,⁴⁹ the humour of the poems is enlivened by the obscene connotations of the foods mentioned à la Aristophanes: the narrator fancies the butcher's wife's *mastarin* (breast-meat) and *lapara* (belly-meat), and scatophagy has a long history of being connected with homosexual practices.⁵⁰ The third poem, too, of which a major theme is the exploitation of the younger monks by the older and the related inequalities of diet, contains very obvious homosexual innuendo ('primary obscenity'), showing up monastic corruption in the Philotheou monastery, where the hierarchs get every type of fish and the best seafood, and drink the best Samian and Chian wines, while the monks are fed on 'holy broth' –

⁴⁵ *Ptochoprodromika* 1.29-32; trans. Alexiou, "Ecriture", 36; cf. "Ploys of Performance", 93.

⁴⁶ *Ptochoprodromika* 4.163-99 = Eideneier 3.237-273.

⁴⁷ *Ptochoprodromika* 4.99-108 = Eideneier 3.167-175.

⁴⁸ *Ptochoprodromika* 4.227-257 = Eideneier 3.273.28-273.63.

⁴⁹ Alexiou, "Ecriture", 16-20.

⁵⁰ Ar., *Knights* 295; Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 192-194.

some onion rings with a few stale crusts and three drops of holy oil thrown into boiling water.⁵¹

Clearly these poems were read or performed at court – with suitable facial expressions, intonation and gestures – with the intention of amusing the court audience of both sexes, which was well versed in professional, oral humour, by this portrayal of the ‘starving’ and hen-pecked author/narrator in his attempt to acquire a square meal.

Why then this emphasis on food in the twelfth century, particularly food eaten by other people? Doubtless, the obsession with the food preferences of other classes is a sign of disaffected times – with the empire less prosperous, the populace was less happy with conspicuous consumption in high places, not even exempting the emperor. One of the signs of this decline is seen to be the promotion of bureaucrats of lowly origins, who do not even appreciate their new privileges and sophistication, but retain their old vulgar eating habits and gastronomic tastes. The court, too, has a new awareness of life in the streets and an increasing interest in the city’s inhabitants and their problems.⁵² Certainly, the act of turning the difficulties encountered by the city’s inhabitants in making a living into fictional discourse for the court’s entertainment acted as a mechanism clearly labelling the populace as ‘the other’, isolating them from the court’s concerns. If “what you eat is what you are”, emperor, ministers, populace and foreigners are all identified by their food preferences – and how better to emphasise these than to make fun of them? To the modern reader, this preoccupation with food and hunger seems an unsophisticated, not to say undignified, form of humour, but the ridiculous in Byzantium had a liberating function. If the humour appears basic, we must remember that the standard works in the Byzantine curriculum included Aristophanes’ *Wealth*, *Clouds* and *Frogs* (plus occasionally *Knights*).⁵³ Anyone who had studied these plays in depth as school texts would have had no difficulty in relating to gluttony as a satirical point-of-attack.

The court was well inured to the highly-structured role and antics of the jester which consisted of verbal humour, including teasing, jests, insult, ridicule, obscenity, and non-verbal humour such as slapstick, buffoonery and horseplay in the presence of an audience – including jokes about the food and the assembled company. Indeed, in Byzantium, humour does not become more refined with social class: there is little or no shift to wit and repartee when we look at the

⁵¹ *Ptochoprodromika* 3 (“Against the Philotheou monastery”), 311, 325a-u (= Eideneier 4.394, 409-429); Alexiou, “Ploys of Performance”, esp. 99-100, 102-103.

⁵² Magdalino, “Byzantine Snobbery”, 67: “Reading between the lines of much twelfth-century literature, one realises that its authors were closer to the people than they cared to admit. They show surprising sympathy for the lot of the exploited poor, and a surprisingly sharp eye for the grosser aspects of life, even when deploring them.”

⁵³ On Aristophanes’ plays in the Byzantine school curriculum, see N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1983), 251-252.

entertainment available at the imperial palace. As in the streets of the city, Byzantium's elite also enjoyed the insults and slapstick inherent in carnival culture, and had permanent professionals to cater for their tastes. Since food preferences were of great interest to Byzantines of all social classes in the twelfth century, it is only to be expected that comment on the tastes and lifestyle of the populace would comprise a major element of the entertainment at the imperial court, reinforcing its feelings of superiority by the delineation of the city's inhabitants as 'outsiders'. It is within this context that we have to place the Ptochoprodromic poems.

Danijel Dzino

Sabaiarius: Beer, wine and Ammianus Marcellinus

In 365 CE the rebellion of the usurper Procopius was raging in Asia Minor, endangering the position of the newly proclaimed emperors Valentinian I and his brother and co-ruler of the East, Valens.¹ Valentinian let his younger brother deal with this rebellion on his own, being already militarily engaged on the northern frontiers. Valens was distracted by simultaneous problems arising on the lower Danube and the eastern border and thus faced initial troubles in dealing with the rebellion.² In late 365 Valens was besieging Chalcedon, an important stronghold of the usurper.³ It was a military stand-off; despite many attempts, imperial troops could not take the city by assault, and there was no time for a long siege as the attackers lacked provisions, and rebels could not get out and break the siege.⁴ Nothing really important for history and the historian seems to be there in that particular moment. However, one of the insults shouted by Procopius' supporters from the walls of Chalcedon was so strikingly significant that the source of historian Ammianus Marcellinus, most certainly one of the eyewitnesses, remembered it well.⁵ Ammianus, never being really fond of Valens and Valentinian,⁶ singled this insult out and preserved it for posterity. The choir of

¹ Cf. R. Till, "Die Kaiserproklamation des Usurpators Procopius", *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 34/35 (1974/75), 75-83; R.C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A study of his historiography and political thought* (Collection Latomus 141) (Brussels 1975), 55-62; N.J.E. Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare* (Collection Latomus 165) (Brussels 1979), 88-92; J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1988), 191-197, for a different aspect of the rebellion.

² The sources: Amm. Marc. 26.6-10; Zos. 4.5-8; Socr., *Hist. eccl.* 4.3-8.

³ Cf. Amm. 26.6.4-5; 8.2; 31.1.4; Socr., *Hist. eccl.* 4.8.

⁴ Valens adopted a vigorous but unsuccessful strategy in 365, trying to take Constantinople and extinguish the rebellion as soon as possible (Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare*, 89). He was almost captured by the rebels after retreating from the siege of Chalcedon (Amm. 26.8.2-3).

⁵ Cf. E.A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Gronningen 1969), 20-42, esp. 39, on the oral sources of Ammianus Marcellinus. N.J.E. Austin, "A Usurper's Claim to Legitimacy: Procopius in AD 365/6", *Rivista storica dell'antichità* 2 (1972), 182, argues that the source was favourable towards Procopius.

⁶ These were largely unsupported allegations by Ammianus, as the brothers did not show more (or less) capability for ruling the empire, nor were they more or less cruel than other rulers (A. Alföldy, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire: The clash between the senate and Valentinian I*, trans. H. Mattingly [Oxford 1952], 3-4, 118 n. 1; Blockley, *Ammianus*, 46 ff). Ammianus merely reflected a variety of contemporary opinions, cf. M. Humphries, "*Nec metu nec adulandi foeditate constricta*: the image of Valentinian I from Symmachus to Ammianus",

defenders repeatedly ridiculed the emperor, calling him ‘*sabaiarius*’.⁷ *Sabaia* was, as Ammianus described it, a liquor made from barley or some other grain, usually drunk by the poor in Illyricum; therefore it was a kind of barley beer.⁸ Thus *sabaiarius* meant nothing more than a ‘beer-man’, or rather a ‘beer drinker’.⁹ The emperor was of Illyrian origin; his father was born in Cibalae (modern day Vinkovci) in Pannonia.¹⁰ From Ammianus’ account we also know that Valens was a pot-bellied fellow,¹¹ perhaps because of his love for *sabaia*. This insult from the rebels most certainly made him angry for a while, as he could not do anything about it; it was some time at least before he got his revenge, demolishing the walls of Chalcedon in order to construct baths in Constantinople.¹²

This paper will try to see why *sabaiarius* was such a derogatory expression and analyse what Ammianus perhaps wanted to say with that label, besides the obvious insult of Valens as a drunkard and barbarian.¹³ In order to understand the immense complexity hidden behind that word, it is necessary to look into the beer geography of ancient continental Europe, the different drinking cultures of Mediterranean and continental Europe, and Graeco-Roman contempt for beer drinkers, returning finally to the Pannonian emperors of late antiquity and the episode described.

What are the other references to *sabaia* and beer drinking in Illyricum? St Jerome, born and raised in Stridon, in the hinterland of Tarsatica,¹⁴ mentioned that a drink named *sabaium* was made by the native population in Pannonia and Dalmatia, and he described it as a kind of *zythos* (beer brewed in Egypt).¹⁵ Cassius

in J.W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (eds), *The Late Roman World and its Historian* (London and New York 1999), 117-126. Cf. n. 60 below.

⁷ Amm. 26.8.2: “...cuius e muris probra in eum iaciebantur, et irrisive compellebatur ut Sabaiarius.”

⁸ Ancient beer was a malt liquor close to ale. Cf. R.C. Engs, “Do Traditional Western European Practices Have Origins in Antiquity?”, *Addiction Research* 2(3) (1995), 236 n. 5.

⁹ As it seems, *sabaia* / *sabaium* was a native word from Illyricum, (indoeuropean **sab-* = liquid) (H. Krahe, *Die Sprache der Illyrier* [Wiesbaden 1955], 38, §29), and *sabaiarius* could also be a word for a beer-brewer (as in *cervesia-cervesarius* CIL 13.10012.7), A. Meier, *Die Sprache der alten Illyrier* 1 (Vienna 1957), 287-288.

¹⁰ Amm. 30.7.2; Alföldy, *A Conflict of Ideas*, 9.

¹¹ Amm. 31.14.7: “...exstanteque mediocriter ventre”.

¹² Socr., *Hist. eccl.* 4.8; Amm. 31.1.4. Cf. Amm. 26.10.6-14; Zos. 4.8.4-5; Eunapius, *FHG* 4.35 (= R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire 2* [Liverpool 1983], 50 [6.34.9]) on the ferocity of Valens’ revenge against the supporters of Procopius.

¹³ “L’injure était donc double elle faisait apparaître Valens comme un buveur et comme un barbare”, in M.A. Marié (ed.), *Ammien Marcelin: Histoire*, vol. 5 (Paris 1984), 244 n. 107.

¹⁴ The hinterland of the modern city of Rijeka. See M. Suić, “Hieronimus Stridonian – Citizen of Tarsatica”, *Rad JAZU (The Works of Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts)* 426/24 (1986), 213-278, who provides the best modern location for the otherwise unknown Stridon, located laconically by Jerome, *De vir. Ill.* 135, on “Dalmatiae quondam Pannoniaeque confinium”.

¹⁵ Jerome, *Comm. in Isai.* 7.19: “...gentili barbaroque sermone appellatur sabaium”. Jerome was not of native origin, nor did he speak the language(s) of the native population in Illyricum (Suić, “Hieronimus”, 268-270). A. Valiño, “La cervesa en las fuentes romanas: base textual y

Dio, a governor of Pannonia in the third century CE, bitterly complained that Pannonians did not drink wine but enjoyed a beverage made from barley and millet.¹⁶ Priscus, envoy to Attila in 448 CE, described the wide use of the barley beverage *camum* amongst the Pannonians.¹⁷ In addition, the oldest existing reference to beer-drinking in the Illyrian neighborhood derives from Theopompus (fourth century BCE), who knew of beer brewed from barley – *bryton* – and an admixture of millet and κούζα (endive or fleabane) – *parabias* – amongst the Paeonians on the borders of Macedonia.¹⁸

Some authorities consider that *sabaiaum* had some interesting etymological links with the worship of Sabazios, an orgiastic Thracian deity whose cult spread all over the ancient world. Jane Harrison, using Aristophanes' ridicule of worshippers of Sabazios as a reference, regarded him as a god of beer, a beer counterpart of Dionysos.¹⁹

Malt liquor was used for millennia in Mesopotamia and Egypt but it never had any success in the classical world.²⁰ According to the classical sources, beer in continental Europe was brewed by the Celts in Spain, Britain and Gaul, as well as by the Illyrians, Germans and Thracians, but it is not clear whether this brewing tradition had any direct or indirect influence from the Middle East or Egypt.²¹ There are several names for beer in classical times, denoting different geographical origin and perhaps different kinds of brew. However, it is too difficult to determine differences between individual brews by relying only on the testimony of literary

fidación de su importancia”, *Ancient History Bulletin* 13 (1999), 68-69, argues that *sabaia* was the Illyrian name for *zythos*. It is less likely that Illyrians used Egyptian beer, being geographically much more exposed to Celtic and Thracian influences.

¹⁶ Dio Cass. 49.36.2 ff.

¹⁷ Jul. Afr., *Cest.* 25; Dioscurides 2.70 *camum*; Priscus, *FHG* 4.83 (= Blockley, 260 [11.2.279] κέρμον. Valiño, “La cervesa”, 66-67, believes that it is a Celtic word from the same root as *curmi*.

¹⁸ Theopomp. in Athen. 10.447d identifies it as a Thracian βρῦτον and παραβίας, certainly a native brew. The Paeonians bordered the Thracians, Macedonians and Illyrians.

¹⁹ She argued that the worship of Sabazios preceded the worship of Dionysos as a god of alcoholic intoxication in Thrace and that wine as a medium of intoxication was used only as a replacement for the original cereal beverage. J. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 3rd edn (Cambridge 1922), 413-424; Ar., *Wasps* 5-12. Cf. Diod. Sic. 1.20.4; 3.73.6; 4.2.5 on the link between Dionysos and beer.

²⁰ Olckmann, s.v. “Bier”, RE 3 (1899); C.A. Forbes, “Beer: A Sober Account”, *Classical Journal* 46(6) (1951), 281-285 and 300; M. Dayagi-Mendels, *Drink and Be Merry: Wine and beer in ancient times* (Jerusalem 1999); Valiño, “La cervesa”, 60-71; M. Nelson, *The Barbarian's Beverage: A history of beer in ancient Europe* (London and New York, forthcoming).

²¹ R.J. Forbes, “Food and Drink”, in C. Singer et al. (eds), *A History of Technology* 2 (Oxford 1956), 140; contra H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (London 1966), 25. The only visible difference was that European beer was more durable than the middle-Eastern variety; cf. Plin., *HN* 14.149; Aeschylus in Athen. 10.447c (matured *bryton*); Marc. Emp., *De Medic.* 28.13: *cervisiae novae*.

sources.²² The most famous ancient beer was certainly Egyptian *zythos* (*zythum*), which was a specific brew made of barley and emmer-wheat.²³ *Zythos* is sometimes used in sources as a common word for beer.²⁴ There were more varieties of malt liquors brewed and consumed in Europe: *cerbesa* (*cervesia*, *cervisia*) and *corma* (*courmi*, *curmi*), made from wheat, or barley and honey, were brewed in Gaul,²⁵ *caelia* and *cerea* from wheat in Spain,²⁶ *bryton* from rye or barley in Thrace, and *parabias* brewed by Paeonians from millet.²⁷ Insular Celts in Britain also knew of beer,²⁸ as well as the Germans north of the Rhine,²⁹ the Lusitanians, the inhabitants of Thule and the Ligurians at the foot of the Alps.³⁰ Ancient European beer was perhaps as strong as diluted wine enjoyed by Greeks and Romans and the ancient sources sometimes referred to it as a wine made of cereals.³¹

It is well known that the classical attitude towards beer and beer-drinking was very negative. Recently, it has been plausibly argued that this attitude was primarily ideological, as beer was considered to be the drink of the others and therefore unacceptable for Greek and Roman consumption, as an essentially

²² Strabo 17.2.5 (824). The Edict of Diocletian distinguishes between *zythos*, *camum* and *cervesia* (2.11-12); Pliny distinguishes *zythos*, *caelia*, *cerea* and *cervesia*, *HN* 22.164.

²³ Ζύθος: Diod. Sic. 1.20.4, 1.34.10, Columella, *Rust.* 10.116 (Pelusian *zythos*); Plin., *HN* 22.164, Dayagi-Mendel, *Drink*, 119. It was different from ancient Egyptian *hekt* or *haqi*, and from other beers brewed in Europe (Olckmann, “Bier”, 458).

²⁴ E.g. Diod. Sic. 5.26.2; Posid. in Athen. 4.152c; Jerome, *Comm. in Is.* 7.19; cf. Forbes “Beer”, 281. *Cervesia* was also often used as a common term in the West and *bryton* in classical Greece. However, Nelson rightly noted that there was no appropriate term for malt liquor in Greek and Latin. M. Nelson, “The cultural construction of beer among the Greeks and Romans”, *Syllecta Classica* 14 (2003), n. 9 (this article was not available to the author in the original publication, Dr. Nelson kindly supplied his manuscript)

²⁵ Plin., *HN* 22.164; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 13.11 [16]; Isid., *Orig.* 20.3.17-8; Diod. Sic. 5.26.2; κόρμια: Athen. 4.152 c-d. κοῦρμι: Dioscurides 2.110; *cervisia* and *curmi*: Marc. Emp. 16.33. Cf. Amm. 15.12.4: “... affectans ad vini similitudinem multiplices potus...”

²⁶ Plin., *HN* 22.164; Flor. 1.34.12-13; Oros. 5.7; Polyb. ap. Athen. 1.16c (= Polyb. 34.9.15); Dioscurides 2.88.

²⁷ Βρῦτον: Aeschylus, Archilochus and Sophocles in Athen. 10.447b-c; Hecat. in Athen. 10.447d. Πῦνον is also mentioned but without a specified place of origin. Athen. 10.447a. See n. 16 for *parabias*.

²⁸ Dioscurides 2.88; K.H. Jackson, *The Goddodin: The oldest Scottish poem* (Edinburgh 1969), 140 (*Goddodin*, A 60), 154 (*The Gorcham of Tudfwlch*); S. Frere, *Britannia: A history of Roman Britain* (London 1967), 43, 293-294; H. Helbaek, “The Isca grain: A Roman plant production in Britain”, *New Phytologist* 63 (1964), 158-164, esp. 163-164.

²⁹ Tac., *Germ.* 23. Forbes, “Beer”, 283, argues that the Germans learned about beer from the Gauls, but the theory is difficult to prove.

³⁰ Strabo 3.3.7 (155); 4.5.5 (201); 4.6.2 (202).

³¹ There are many references to a barley wine (οἶνον εὐωδίας or οἶνον κριθίνον); cf. Nelson, “Cultural Construction”, n. 56. Diodorus 1.20.4 describes *zythos* as being as strong as wine. Isid., *Orig.* 20.3.18; Oros. 5.7, explained that the name *caelia* derives from the heat it caused. It would be difficult to imagine that Numantines used light beer for encouragement before battle as Flor. 1.34.12-3 and Oros. 5.7 report.

barbarian beverage.³² Wine-drinking Mediterraneans ridiculed beer for a long time. No wonder, as Harrison said, that the follower of the beer god was regarded as a low fellow. “Sabazios, god of the cheap cereal drink, brings rather sleep than inspiration.”³³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus is even more direct in his negative attitude towards beer drinkers: the Gauls used to drink smelly liquor made of barley rotted in water.³⁴ Vergil, in *Georgics*, presents a romantic picture of wild Scythians inhabiting the furthest ends of Earth, drinking ale (*fermentum*) in their deep-dug dungeons, joyously imitating the pleasures of wine.³⁵ Drunkenness caused by beer was regarded as pure passion without fulfillment, Eros without Venus.³⁶ Classical doctors regarded beer as a limited health hazard.³⁷ However, beer was occasionally used in classical medicine; Marcellus Empiricus recommended salty hot *cervesia* as a medicine for a cough.³⁸ Beer was also used by craftsmen for softening ivory, and in cosmetics for skin care.³⁹ Only rarely did Greeks and Romans not despise beer.⁴⁰

Modern anthropologists have noted a striking difference between the Mediterranean and northern Europe in the matter of drinking habits. Apparently, this difference originated in antiquity, when the Mediterranean (except Egypt) shared a strong Graeco-Roman wine-drinking culture and northern Europeans consumed mainly malt liquor, cider and mead. These drinking patterns remained so strong that they survived into the modern age. The southern drinking pattern consumed wine often but in smaller quantities, being socially less tolerant of intoxication, while the northerners enjoyed alcohol less often but drank to intoxication, and tolerated public intoxication. There is also a mixed pattern characterised by frequent drinking and high consumption of wine and beer, but without toleration for public intoxication. This division follows the frontiers of the Roman empire; former Romanised provinces remained wine-drinking, border areas had a mixed pattern, and ‘barbarian’ parts of Europe including Britain preserved the northern pattern. Some areas such as Spain or Gaul transferred from an

³² Nelson, “Cultural Construction”, *passim*.

³³ Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 419-20; cf. Aristotle in Athen. 10.447a-b.

³⁴ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 13.11 [16].

³⁵ Verg., *Georg.* 3.380. *Fermentum* is mentioned several times in the Latin sources but only as a general term denoting malt liquor: Servius Honoratus ap. Verg., *Georg.* 3.380.

³⁶ Plut., *Mor.* 752 B.

³⁷ Dioscurides 2.70 ff thought that beer caused headaches and had a damaging influence on kidneys, nerves and muscles. Cf. Nelson, “Cultural Construction”, nn. 23-34 for the negative treatment of beer in classical medical literature.

³⁸ Marc. Emp. 16.33, cf. also 28.13: a medicine against intestinal worms.

³⁹ Plut., *Mor.* 499 E (ivory); Plin., *NH* 22.164 (cosmetics)

⁴⁰ Diodorus finds Egyptian *zythos* to be close to wine in aroma and strength and to have a pleasant smell, and Xenophontes became quite fond of Armenian beer, after he became used to it. Diod. Sic. 1.20.4; 1.34.10-11; 3.73.6; 4.25; Xenoph., *Anab.* 4.5.27.

originally beer-drinking to a wine-drinking culture through the Mediterranean influence and the process of Romanisation.⁴¹

It is not necessary to explain here the reasons how and why wine dominated the Mediterranean. A moderate climate and the cult of Dionysos made its way throughout the Graeco-Roman world. Wine consumption became available to almost all strata of Roman society after *ca* 100 BCE,⁴² but the drinking culture generally remained that of moderate consumption.⁴³ The northerners used beer, cider and mead as alcoholic beverages; beer as well as mead was used for ceremonial drinking amongst the Celts and Germans.⁴⁴ It has even been suggested that drinking had a significant socio-political function in Celtic society, as it was essentially a royal prerogative and the emblem of sovereignty in the afterlife.⁴⁵ *Caelia* was used as a means of encouragement for soldiers in battle, the Numantines fasted on half-raw meat and *caelia*, preparing themselves for death before battle.⁴⁶ However, a pattern of heavy drinking amongst northern barbarians, about which we are informed by classical writers,⁴⁷ modern scholarship explained as the result of infrequent consumption of alcohol. Wine and mead were too expensive for commoners on the Continent and beer was more readily available.⁴⁸

Engs' hypothesis, mentioned above, on the historical reasons for different beverage drinking consumption in antiquity does not include Illyricum. Rare classical sources reveal the same pattern of alcohol consumption amongst the peoples in Illyricum, as amongst the Celts and Germans, namely heavy drinking and an almost total absence of wine consumption before the Greek colonisation of the Adriatic islands and Roman occupation of the interior.⁴⁹ Whether cereal

⁴¹ Engs, "Western practices", 227-228 *passim*; "What Should We Be Researching?: Past Influences, Future Ventures", in E. Houghton and A.M. Roche (eds), *Learning about Drinking* (Washington 2001), 148-149 with references.

⁴² A.P. McKinlay, "Roman Sobriety in the Early Empire", *Classical Bulletin* 26 (1949/50), 34-36; N. Purcell, "Wine and Wealth in Ancient Italy", *JRS* 75 (1985), 9 ff., esp. 13 ff.

⁴³ A notable exception is the period of the first century BCE and CE, when alcoholism was on the rise. For the drinking history of the Romans see: E.M. Jellinek, "Drinkers and Alcoholics in Ancient Rome", *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 37(11) (1976), 1728-1741; A.P. McKinlay, "Roman sobriety in the later Republic", *Classical Bulletin* 25 (1948), 27-28; "Roman sobriety in the Early Empire", *passim*; Purcell, "Wine and Wealth", 1-19.

⁴⁴ H.R. Ellis-Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe* (Manchester 1988), 41-45; B. Arnold, "Drinking the Feast: Alcohol and the Legitimation of Power in Celtic Europe", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 9(1) (1999), 73 ff, esp. 84-88 (the Celts).

⁴⁵ Arnold, "Drinking the Feast", *passim* summarised in 87-8.

⁴⁶ Oros. 5.7; Flor. 1.34.12-13.

⁴⁷ See classical sources on barbarian intoxication in A.P. McKinlay, "Ancient Experience with Intoxicating Drinks: Non-Classical Peoples", *Quarterly Journal of studies on Alcohol* 9 (1948), 388-92, 407-413.

⁴⁸ Arnold, "Drinking the Feast", 75. Cf. Amm. 26.8.2: "... paupertinus in Illyrico potus."

⁴⁹ Theopomp. in Athen. 10.440a; 10.443a-c; Polyb. 2.4.6, 29.13; Liv. 44.30-5-6. Too much wine, rather than beer or mead, caused the death of the Illyrian king Agron and the alcoholism of another king Genthius, but in all probability wine was consumed only amongst the elite. A

beverages were introduced during the Celtic migrations in the fourth century BCE or from Thrace was not known; it appears that Thrace was a much more likely influence.⁵⁰ In late antiquity, Illyricum was one of the more Romanised parts of the empire and local language and culture was under strong Roman influence.⁵¹ Still, there is nothing to suggest that drinking patterns there changed substantially; production and consumption of wine never really gained ground amongst native populations further from the Dalmatian coast and wine produced there was of poor quality.⁵²

The Mediterraneans, who apparently became generally less and less tolerant of intoxication in later antiquity,⁵³ regarded these drinking habits as barbarian. In Ammianus' time, the main drunkards were barbarians and soldiers, many of whom, like Valens, came from Illyricum.⁵⁴ They only complemented the classical picture of Illyricum and its inhabitants, who were regarded as semi-barbarians despite the thorough Romanisation they achieved. Illyricum served to classical intellectual thought as an example of barbarian otherness for a long time. It provided a contrast to the qualities of Graeco-Roman civilisation as its barbarian negative.⁵⁵ Cultural prejudices about the inhabitants of Illyricum and their assumed *furor*, *ferocia*, *feritas* and *superbia*, were deeply rooted for centuries in Roman minds.⁵⁶ This prejudice was certainly frustrating for some of its inhabitants living amongst the Mediterraneans. The most striking known example is one Murranus, a migrant

different opinion is expressed by M. Zaninović, "The Illyrians and the Grapevine", *Annuaire. Centre d'Études Balkaniques* 13/11 (1976), 264 ff, who argues that coastal Illyrians had a wine-drinking tradition a long time before the Greek arrival in the Adriatic. On the absence of wine in Illyricum, see Strabo 5.1.8 (214), 7.5.10 (316-7).

⁵⁰ Olckmann, "Bier", 462 assumes that the Celts or Roman soldiers introduced beer to the Balkans. Thracian beer-brewing tradition is older than Celtic settlement.

⁵¹ A. Mocsy, *Pannonia* (London and Boston 1974), 247-249, 259-263; A. Stipčević, *Iliri*, 2nd edn (Zagreb 1989), 51-57, giving an essential bibliography on the subject.

⁵² Dio Cass. 49.36.3 (poor quality of Pannonian wine); Zaninović, "Illyrians and the Grapevine", 270-272; Stipčević, *Iliri*, 108. There were some attempts to grow vines around Mons Almus (Fruška gora) near Sirmium by the emperor Probus in the third century CE, but without lasting results (Aur. Victor, *Caes.* 37.3; *Epit. De Caes.* 37.3-4).

⁵³ Jellinek, "Drinkers", 1739-40.

⁵⁴ Amm. 22.4.6. Barbarians: 15.12.4 (Gauls), 18.21.13; 27.2.2 (Alamanni). There are the references to wine riots in Rome (14.6.1; 15.7.3) and *tabernae* subculture (14.6.25; 28.9.4), but this does not suggest wide-spread alcoholism in the Mediterranean (as Rome was the exception [Purcell, "Wine and Wealth", 15]), but also Ammianus' own contempt for the citizens of Rome.

⁵⁵ J. Wallace, "A (Hi)story of Illyria", *Greece & Rome* 45(2) (1988), 213-216 and ff.

⁵⁶ P. Salmon, "L'image des Illyriens à Rome. Etude de mentalité", *Iliria* 16(1) (1987), 203-211. On the stereotypes in Ammianus, T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representations of Historical Reality* (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 56) (Ithaca 1998), 111-119.

from Pannonia to Italy, who humbly acknowledged his Pannonian origin as something to be ashamed of on his tombstone.⁵⁷

It is common knowledge that the Roman empire in its later phase underwent huge cultural change, reinventing itself in the third century on different foundations.⁵⁸ After the Severan dynasty, the majority of Roman emperors in the third and fourth century were of Pannonian/Illyrian origins. Certainly they were not always of the same ethnic stock, but rather they shared the same cultural background.⁵⁹ The fall of Constantine's dynasty, which through time became culturally assimilated and as removed from its Balkan origins as possible, and the fast change of Julian and Jovian on the throne again brought Illyrian emperors onto the Roman throne. Valentinian, and especially Valens, surrounded themselves with fellow Pannonians and placed them in high administrative positions in Rome and the provinces. Their bad reputation in Ammianus was a reflection of contemporary resentment towards the rise of the new aristocracy, their low birth and lack of classical education. These 'New Romans' were ambitious, capable and brutal, like the regime they served.⁶⁰ However, Pannonian unpopularity was even more visible in the East than in Rome at the very beginning of the rule of Valentinian and Valens.

The revolt of Procopius was a direct reaction to this sudden change. Procopius was not a favorite of ancient historians.⁶¹ Although culturally and emotionally closer to the cousin of Julian than to the Pannonian emperor, Ammianus was strongly morally opposed to any kind of usurpation,⁶² so that he followed hostile

⁵⁷ "Murranus, nam ipsa miseria docet etiam barbaros scribere...me...hominem barbarum, nat(um) Pannonium." G. Mancini, "Iscrizione sepolcrale di Anversa", in N. de Arcangelis (ed.), *Atti del Convegno Storico Abruzzese-Molisano, 25-29 marzo 1931* (Casabordino 1933), 449-452.

⁵⁸ It was "the military revolution"; cf. P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London 1971), 24 ff.

⁵⁹ R. Syme, "Danubian and Balkan Emperors", *Historia* 22(2) (1973), 310-316, rightly objects to the automatic assumption of the Illyrian origin of these emperors. We are here more concerned with their cultural background than with their ethnicity.

⁶⁰ Cf. Alföldy, *Conflict*, 13-18; J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford 1975), 1-31 (Roman senatorial aristocracy), 32-55 (new elite); Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, 25-34. This senatorial animosity was ignited by Valentinian's prosecutions of some leading senators for magic arts and adultery, rather than by general cultural prejudice (Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 40-41, 56 ff). There were also other influential provincial cliques in high administrative positions in that time besides the Pannonians, like the Cappadocians, Africans or Spaniards (Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 272-274).

⁶¹ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.3 ff.; Oros. 7.32.4 (a less negative view of Procopius is given by Zos. 4.4.2 ff; Eunapius, *FHG* 4.31-35 (= Blockley, 50 [6.34.3-9]). Cf. Neri, "L'Usurpatore come tiranno nel lessico politico della tarda antichità", in F. Paschoud and J. Szidat (eds), *Usurpationen in der Spätantike* (Historia Einzelschriften 111, Stuttgart 1997), for the treatment of usurpers in the literature of late antiquity.

⁶² Blockley, *Ammianus*, 57-59; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 201-203; Neri, "L'Usurpatore", 79-80, 84.

imperial propaganda and gave a negative picture of Procopius and his supporters. The historian represented supporters of Procopius as being drawn from the lower classes, dregs of the city, slaves and servants.⁶³ Procopius himself was described as a buffoon; he was a bizarre and supernatural character from some popular mime of the day, "... [an] evil spirit, which has come from hell to stir up civil strife".⁶⁴ However, although this rebellion attracted a substantial following amongst the lower classes, it still enjoyed some support from the higher classes, especially from ambitious civil servants looking for the opportunity of a lifetime.⁶⁵ Essentially it was a combination of pagan reaction to Christian successors of Julian and a still present affection for the house of Constantine that brought him followers from the higher classes and amongst the soldiers.⁶⁶ Sympathies towards the house of Constantine were particularly strong in Chalcedon, where Julian had conducted trials against sympathisers of Constantius just two years before Procopius' rebellion.⁶⁷

Why did this, on a first sight trivial detail (*sabaianus*), attract the attention of Ammianus' sensitive and inquisitive mind, and what does it say about the historian himself? Perhaps it was the linguistic directness of the word *sabaianus*, never avoided by Ammianus himself. Its auditory complement to the visual aspect produced dramatic exaggeration, so beloved by Ammianus, in a scene where the choir of defenders chanted '*sabaianus, sabaianus*' to a helpless, humiliated and certainly very, very angry emperor.⁶⁸ It was a small cameo of Ammianus' composition.⁶⁹ Firstly, Valens is shown besieging Chalcedon with great vigor – *magnis viribus insistebat* – but without success because of persistent and stubborn

⁶³ Amm. 26.6.14-7.14.

⁶⁴ Amm. 26.6.15 ff, cf. theatrical metaphor in Zos. 4.5.5, discussing the same event. F.W. Jenkins, "Theatrical metaphors in Ammianus Marcellinus", *Eranos* 85 (1987), 60.

⁶⁵ R. Delmaire, "Les usurpateurs du Bas-Empire et le recrutement des fonctionnaires (Essai de réflexion sur les asises du pouvoir et leurs limites)", in Paschoud and Szidat, *Usurpationen*, 118-120.

⁶⁶ Blockley, *Ammianus*, 56-61; A. Solari, "La rivolta Procopiana", *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 143-148. The army was generally neutral towards religious matters (cf. A. Momigliano, "The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity", in Momigliano [ed.], *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* [Oxford 1963], 23-26), but they were won over through still present affection for the house of Constantine, cf. Amm. 26.7.10; 26.7.16-7. Still, many public servants from Constantius' time also served Valens faithfully; cf. L.A. Tritle, "Whose Tool? Ammianus Marcellinus on the Emperor Valens", *Ancient History Bulletin* 8(4) (1994), 146 ff.

⁶⁷ Amm. 22.3.

⁶⁸ On the directness of Ammianus' linguistic expression and his love for the visual aspect of the event, see Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 187-192. For dramatic exaggeration and visual aspect in Ammianus, see R. MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus", *Art Bulletin* 46(4) (1964), esp. 452-455; and the use of theatrical elements and metaphors, Jenkins, "Theatrical metaphors", 55-61.

⁶⁹ The entire description of the rebellion of Procopius in Ammianus is a "minor masterpiece of description" (Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 192).

defence. In response to the attacks, the defenders, instead of *ballistae*, arrows or spears, hurled (*iaciebantur*) from the high walls of Chalcedon something much more damaging than weapons. They hurled words, insulting and ridiculing the emperor, calling him *sabaiarius*. Then follows Ammianus' explanation of *sabaia* as a drink of the poor in Illyricum, thus underlining the audio-visual effect already achieved with cultural and social aspects of the word. The image is striking with its surreal simplicity and colourful authenticity. Ammianus' demanding audience was certainly pleased every time he confronted them with a dash of real-life images like this, in his public readings.⁷⁰

We may say that this episode complements Ammianus' picture of Valens as he wanted him to be presented: a timid, cruel, uneducated, drunken semi-barbarian rustic from Pannonia, ugly and crude both in appearance and character.⁷¹ Certainly, we should be aware that this picture was influenced by a variety of opinions, mostly originating in the social strata of Ammianus.⁷² However, it does not seem that it was influenced by Ammianus' general eastern prejudice towards the Pannonians, as suggested by some authorities.⁷³ Actually, wide criticism of Valens' brother Valentinian in Ammianus' account never followed these lines. Perhaps it stems from antipathy towards Valens on a personal level developed during the Antioch trials for magic in the early 370s, where Ammianus in person witnessed the cruelty of Valens and his administration.⁷⁴

This episode certainly reflects the genuine dissatisfaction of the local population with the new ruler and his Pannonian staff, especially his father-in-law Petronius. This anti-Pannonian sentiment was an important propaganda card played by

⁷⁰ N. Ivić, *TEXTVS. Istraživanja o Amijanu Marcelinu* (Zagreb 2001), 199 ff, esp. 290-292, shows the ultimate attraction of real-life experiences in the *Res Gestae* (primarily Ammianus' own experiences like the Megida episode, but even in second-hand experiences, like the siege of Chalcedon, Ammianus preserved freshness of original experience) for Ammianus' audience. Cf. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 11-16, discussing representations, stylisations and the distortion of reality in Ammianus.

⁷¹ Cf. Amm. 27.5.8; 29.1.11; 31.14.5; 31.14.8 (uneducated rustic) 31.14.7 (physical description); Blockley, *Ammianus*, 36-48, esp. 46-48. Cf. E.C. Evans, "Roman descriptions of personal appearance in history and biography", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46 (1935), 43-84, on the relation between physical description and character in Roman historiography. See also R. Seager, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven studies in his language and thought* (Columbia, Miss. 1986), 80-83, discussing the meaning of the term *sobrius* in Ammianus.

⁷² Humphries, "Nec metu", giving the example of Valentinian I. There is no reason to see things as being any different in the case of Valens, although he certainly was much weaker and more ineffectual in imposing his will than his brother (Tritle, "Whose Tools?", 148-149). We should be cautious of the assumption that Ammianus exclusively represents the Roman senatorial aristocracy (A. Cameron, "The Roman friends of Ammianus", *JRS* 54 [1964], 15-28).

⁷³ Notably Alföldy, *Conflict*, 117-118.

⁷⁴ Amm. 29.5 ff; Zos. 4.13-15. On Ammianus being in Antioch at that time: Thompson, *Historical Work*, 12-14; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 15.

Procopius,⁷⁵ showing how easy it was to plant his propaganda and mobilise public opinion against the Pannonians amongst prejudiced and narrow-sighted easterners. It was cultural prejudice on two levels: firstly, geographic and ethnic prejudice on the part of Mediterranean wine-drinkers towards beer-drinking continentals. Secondly, it was the class prejudice of Mediterranean city-dwellers towards soldiers from recently and sparsely urbanised continental provinces and the poor in general, as *sabaia* was the poor person's drink, a fact underlined by Ammianus. As Matthews points out, and it may well be thought of Ammianus himself, this *sabaiaarius* episode shows the narrowness of Procopius' power base, limited to urban easterners.⁷⁶

Modern scholarship has not emphasised enough that the Pannonians were unpopular not only amongst the easterners but also amongst certain Latin-speaking soldiers, whom Procopius approached on one occasion and easily converted to his side to fight against *Pannonius degener*.⁷⁷ And who were those provoking the emperor with this strange word? He was insulted by no other word for a beer-drinker but *sabaiaarius*. Ammianus keeps in the *Res Gestae* the original word shouted from the walls, rather than changing it to another more common form for a good reason, as the *sabaiaarius* not only offends Valens personally but also offends his Pannonian origins at the same time.⁷⁸ Therefore, people who knew the exact meaning of this obscure word from provincial language called him *sabaiaarius*. Perhaps, they were Latin-speaking soldiers who were already on Procopius' side, who had served in Illyricum, or learned this word from fellow soldiers originating from Illyricum. Regardless of whether this hypothesis is true or not, the fact is that Valens was unpopular amongst soldiers from the West as well; thus that East-West animosity was just one side of the message hidden in *sabaiaarius*.

For a long time, rule of the ancient world was in the hands of northerners, rough soldiers of Illyro-Celtic stock, and it is no wonder that their military spirit and overwhelmingly Latin education was in conflict with the contemporary ideals of

⁷⁵ Amm. 26.6.6-9. See Austin, "Usurper's claim to legitimacy"; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 199-201, for individual aspects of Procopius' propaganda.

⁷⁶ Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 199-200. Procopius' power base was indeed very limited (Amm. 26.7.12; Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare*, 91), and he was surrounded with "...un rassemblement hétéroclite et peu fiable d'intrigants, d'ambitieux et de fonctionnaires nommés malgré eux..." (Delmaire, "Les usurpateurs du Bas-Empire", 120).

⁷⁷ Amm. 26.7.16. It is interesting to note the opposite situation when the emperor Julian was called with contempt *Asianus* and *Graeculus* by Roman soldiers from western provinces (Amm. 17.9.3).

⁷⁸ As we saw above, *sabaia* was an obscure native word from Illyricum, not widely known to Ammianus' audience, and for that reason the historian takes care to explain it: "est autem sabaia ex ordeo vel frumento in liquorem converses paupertinus in Illyrico potus". If Ammianus were simply to vary the word, he would use another widely known word for beer such as *zythos*, like St Jerome, *cervesa*, or *camum* – the official term for Pannonian beer in Diocletian's *Edict*.

culture based on knowledge of oratory and classical, especially Greek literature.⁷⁹ The *sabaiarius* episode shows once more how this strange third-century grafting of the Pannonian military mind onto the mellow body of the late antique world functioned and malfunctioned one hundred years later. In a way, modern scholarship can see the fourth century as a century of overwhelming and omnipresent anti-intellectualism in the ancient world.⁸⁰ Certainly, the modern view is heavily influenced by the negative attitude of the old aristocracy of the time whose opinion dominates our sources, but even they sometimes understood, like Aurelius Victor, that Illyrian soldier emperors were *optimi rei publicae* regardless of their lack of manners, education and low birth.⁸¹

The *sabaiarius* episode reveals some of the essential social divisions that expressed the bipolar nature of the late antique world, as well as political divisions of the moment. In the single word *sabaiarius* are juxtaposed and opposed: Greek East and Latin West; Mediterranean coast belt and continental Europe; beer and wine; moderation and intoxication; poor and rich (or rather, less poor); soldier and citizen; soldier and fellow soldier; Constantine's dynasty and Valentinian's dynasty; Classical ideals of culture and Illyrian military spirit; urban and rural. History needed someone like Ammianus Marcellinus, that *multiformis historiae formator*,⁸² to condense all of that into one single word of an unknown and obscure language – *sabaiarius*.

⁷⁹ Alföldy, *Conflict*, 96 ff with references. Certainly, we can doubt the extent of this conflict.

⁸⁰ R. MacMullen, *Changes in the Roman Empire* (Princeton 1990), 117-129.

⁸¹ Aur. Victor, *Caes.* 39.26, cf. 40.12-13, reflecting his own times rather than the past.

⁸² Ivić, *TEXTVS*, 199-292.

Paul Tuffin & Meaghan McEvoy

Steak à la Hun: Food, drink, and dietary habits in Ammianus Marcellinus

In his *Res Gestae* Ammianus Marcellinus makes quite frequent mention of matters pertaining to food and drink. In the context of a conference on food and drink in Byzantium, it seems reasonable to examine the scope and nature of such content, investigating just what reference is made in the *Res gestae* to the topic, how it is introduced, and what function it might have in the narrative. In sum, then, this paper constitutes a focussed review of Ammianus' treatment of the consumption of food and drink.¹

Part 1: The supply of food and drink in military and civilian contexts; the tactical use of food

In a history with a central interest in military affairs arguably the most expected references to food would be in the provisioning of armies, and certainly there are plenty of such remarks, as, for example, during Julian's Persian campaign (24.7.6ff), and preparations such as those made by Julian on campaign against the Germans, repairing the fortress of Tres Tabernae and stockpiling supplies there (16.11.11-12), and likewise reviving abandoned cities on the Rhine at 27.2.3-4. In addition to this acknowledgement of the general importance of food to the supply and function of an army, its essential nature is further demonstrated through the use of the tactic we know as 'a scorched earth policy', employed by the Romans on campaign against the Persians (18.7.3-4: a massive conflagration), by Julian at 24.1.14, and by Valentinian at 27.10.7.

Possibly somewhat less expected in the mention of food in a military context is Ammianus' remark, at a point when the army was very well provisioned, to the effect that "...whereas men previously dreaded a dearth there was now a serious fear that they would overeat" (24.3.14).² This comment, however, may be linked to

¹ The paper has been revised since its presentation at the Conference. The authors are most grateful to Associate Professor Roger Scott for reading the revised paper and providing suggestions for improvement, including a number of references to comparative material in the Latin historiographic tradition.

² English translations of the *Res Gestae* are taken wherever available (the very few exceptions being noted) from Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (A.D. 354-378)*, selected and translated by W. Hamilton, with an introduction and notes by A. Wallace-Hadrill (Harmondsworth 1986). Translations taken from J.C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, with an

Ammianus' general espousal of moderation in all things and the concomitant dangers of excess, points to which we will come later, and more specifically perhaps with a concern of his that over-indulgence in food and drink is likely to reduce military morale.³

References to the provisioning of armies also appear to be used to reflect upon the prudence of a general, most notably in praise of Julian. Thus when we hear of his orders to set fire to enemy fields, it is "...on condition that every man first took plenty of what he needed to supply himself" (24.1.14) and we are led to admire his foresight,⁴ just as we are over his efforts at Tres Tabernae (16.11.11-12) and his swift refortification of cities and the building of granaries prior to major battles (18.2.3-4).

There is, nevertheless, a memorable occasion when Julian was travelling through his provinces with his troops and encouraging peace, and his food preparations were less than adequate: he had been intending to replenish supplies with crops *en route*,

But this proved a serious miscalculation. The crops were not yet ripe, and when the troops had used up what they had with them and could find nothing to eat anywhere they resorted to the direst threats and heaped insults and abuse upon Julian, calling him a degenerate Greek from Asia and a liar and a fool who pretended to be wise. (17.9.3)

The ferocity with which Julian's generally loyal troops turn upon him at his failure to provide adequate food highlights the close link between hunger and morale. Ammianus continues by describing how some of the troops spoke out, protesting that they had endured many hardships, and objecting that "now...when the final destruction of the enemy is within our grasp, we are wasting away from hunger, the most ignominious of all deaths" (17.9.4). The fact that those voicing their complaints felt the need to ask their commander not to think them mutineers (17.9.5) clearly suggests that their mood and words were capable of such an interpretation.

For people under siege, fear of hunger could also be thought to undermine morale, as we hear when the Romans were being besieged by the Isaurians:

English translation, Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols (London and Cambridge, Mass. 1935-1939) are noted as such by the addition of 'R' after the reference.

³ See 21.12.15, cited below at p. 77.

⁴ The passage continues: "In this way the enemy suffered substantial damage before they were aware of it. Our warriors were glad to make use of the spoil won by their own hands. They felt that their own valour had opened up fresh magazines to them, and were delighted to have ample subsistence without having to draw on the supplies carried by the ships."

The besieged were greatly troubled by the fact that the Isaurians, having captured some boats which were carrying grain on the river, were abundantly supplied with provisions, while they themselves had already exhausted the regular stores and were dreading the deadly pangs of approaching famine. (14.2.19 R)

In a similar way, “some strong companies of Frankish skirmishers” (17.2.1), after being besieged by Julian through December and January, were finally worn down to surrender by hunger and extreme desperation (17.2.3). Yet just as hunger has the effect of undermining morale and leading eventually to desperation, so too can a good meal revive purpose and determination: after many skirmishes with the Romans, the Isaurians “dislodged by fear and the strength of the legions” paused at Laranda. “There they were refreshed with food and rest, and after their fear had left them, they attacked some rich villages” (14.2.11-12 R).

Not only, indeed, is the availability of food seen to be alternatively undermining of morale, or restorative for an army, but it is also shown to have severe effects on behaviour. We hear later of the same Isaurians, filled with fury “to which despair and famine added fuel” (14.2.14 R), attacking three Roman legions, “on fire with madness...ready to rush upon the sword, regardless of their lives” (14.2.15 R). Similarly, despite Julian’s good governance of Gaul, “the fury of the barbarians burst out more violently than ever” (16.5.16). They were like “wild beasts” that, even when a stronger shepherd has replaced those more neglectful, “continue their attacks upon flocks and herds, maddened by hunger and regardless of their own safety”.

Just so the barbarians, having consumed what they had plundered, were driven by famine to renew their raids; sometimes they carried off a prize, at other times they perished before they could make a capture. (16.5.17)

In book 31.4-5 Ammianus describes the crossing of the Rhine by the Goths, roundly condemning it as the cause of the overthrow of Rome (*passim*). He notes their distress due to lack of food and records how the Roman generals Lupicinus and Maximus “devised an abominable form of barter”:

They collected all the dogs that their insatiable greed could find and exchanged them each for a slave, and among these slaves were some sons of leading men. (31.4.11)

Ammianus in fact ascribes the first cause of the ensuing uprising of the Goths at Marcianople to the continuing lack of provisions and the Roman refusal to allow them even to buy victuals in the city (31.5.1-4).

Within the civilian sphere fear of food shortage can also cause hysteria and violence: Ammianus writes how Gallus, instead of taking some action to relieve the threat of famine, “handed over” to the commons of Antioch Theophilus, the governor of Syria (14.7.5). They, “maddened with hunger as the shortage of provisions grew worse,...belaboured him with feet and fists till he was half dead and then finished the wretched man off by tearing him in pieces” (14.7.6). Similar violence was threatened against Tertullus, Prefect of Rome, by the people of the Eternal City, “to whom the prospect of famine is the worst of all disasters” (19.10.1).

All of these occasions for the mention of food and provisions so far in the *Res Gestae* might reasonably be expected within the context of a history with a strong military and political focus – and an abiding concern for the city of Rome itself. There is, however, another repeated way in which food is used as a tactic of sorts, which is perhaps less predictable: invitations to dine with the enemy should be treated with the most extreme caution. King Arsaces of Armenia was fooled by Sapor, the king of the Persians through “a calculated mixture of flattery and perjury”:

He was entertained at a banquet, and then taken by Sapor’s orders to a concealed door. His eyes were put out... Finally he was exiled to a fortress called Agabana, where he was tortured and dispatched by the sword of the executioner. (27.12.3)

Gabinus, king of the Quadi, fell for the ‘feigned friendliness’ of the *dux per Valeriam*, Marcellianus, and suffered a similar fate as he was leaving a dinner, Marcellianus’ murderous act constituting, as Ammianus writes, “a most infamous violation of the sacred laws of hospitality” (29.6.5). Just so, too, does the general Traianus use ‘a confidence trick’ with Pap, a later Armenian king, and when his plans mature has him slaughtered, having invited him “in the most respectful terms to a banquet” (30.1.19). “By this act of treachery”, Ammianus comments, “simple credulity was wickedly abused. Under the very eyes of the god who protects guests, and at a banquet whose sanctity would be respected even by the dwellers by the Black Sea, the blood of a stranger was spilt over the fine table-linen” (30.1.22). Thus in this treacherous kind of banqueting, which relies on the one hand on the conventionally safe environment of a shared meal, guaranteed by the laws of hospitality,⁵ and on unmitigated deception on the other, we find a further strategic use of food, a use for which Ammianus indicates his horror and disgust.⁶

⁵ Returning to Ammianus’ account of the uprising of the Goths against Lupicinus (31.5.1 ff, see above in this section), Fritigern and Alavivus have been entertained by Lupicinus within Marcianople with a sumptuous meal, while outside the uprising has begun. On learning of this Lupicinus puts to death “the whole guard of honour that is waiting for the two princes outside his headquarters” (31.5.6). Fritigern, in fear of being held hostage, argues that a regular battle

Ammianus' references to the provisioning of troops on campaign remind us of the vital importance of adequate supplies to an army, and the dangers of over-indulgence even in a military context, as well as allowing him to highlight the praiseworthy characteristic of foresight in his hero Julian.⁷ Our examination of the provisioning of an army also highlights the crucial link between hunger and the morale of an army, which leads us subsequently to the connection between hunger and behaviour – both military and civilian, and in turn by contrast to the bracing and reinvigorating effects of sufficient food on a weary army. Finally, food can be seen as important also in its use of encouraging unsuspecting victims to let down their guard at the dinner table when invited to share a meal with a calculating general, however much this may be at odds with the sacred conventions of hospitality, as Ammianus points out. In all of these cases Ammianus' concern with and interest in food can be directly attributed to his focus upon the military and political history of the empire, the fate of the city of Rome, and his consequent subject material.

Part 2: Eating and drinking as part of Ammianus' value system

It nevertheless rapidly becomes clear to the reader of the *Res Gestae* that Ammianus is not just concerned with the supply of food and its tactical use but that he also considers it an area of importance both in judging the moral value of individuals, groups, and even whole societies (moderation in eating and drinking being praised as a virtue and lack of moderation, or excess, criticised as a vice)⁸

might be avoided if he is set free in order “to pacify his countrymen, whose riotous conduct he ascribed to a belief that their chiefs had been done to death under a show of hospitality” (31.5.7). This latter is a clear echo of the ‘murderous dinner’ theme and one which suggests that the possibility of such treachery would not only spring readily enough to the mind of the Goths but also was far from alien to the Roman mind given that Lupicinus is convinced and grants Fritigern’s request (31.5.7). For a later appearance of the ‘murderous dinner’, see Prokopios’ description of the murder of the Vandal tyrant Gontharis (*De bello Vandalico*, ii.28.1-34).

⁶ On the other hand no such reaction is recorded by Ammianus in relation to the fate of Vadomarius, king of the Alamanni, who was arrested at a banquet by Julian’s secretary Philagrius, following Julian’s instructions. Although clearly the rules of hospitality were broken here too, Ammianus’ lack of condemnation may not be due solely to his admiration of Julian: (a) Vadomarius was not enticed into the banquet – though Julian was wanting him taken when he was off his guard; (b) he was not murdered, but arrested and sent to Spain (21.4.1-6).

⁷ Ammianus’ treatment of Valentinian’s dwelling- and crop-burning does not place the same emphasis on the prudence of the emperor in the prior garnering of adequate provisions but simply notes that those setting the fires kept aside “such foodstuffs as doubt about the outcome of affairs forced them to gather and keep” (27.10.7).

⁸ This specific concern in relation to the consumption of food and drink reflects, of course, a more general concern with moderation and excess. See, e.g. R. Seager, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven studies in his language and thought* (Columbia 1986), 1-17; A. Brandt, *Moralische Werte in den Res gestae des Ammianus Marcellinus* (Göttingen 1999), *passim* but particularly section 3.2 *Umgang mit Affekten*, 121 ff.

and in assessing tribes and nations as uncivilised and barbarian as against civilised and Roman.

Eating and drinking habits as a virtue

Given Ammianus' admiration of Julian, we might well have expected to find that he becomes the touchstone in the history for dietary moderation,⁹ a moderation that might indeed have come straight from the glorious Rome of old. It is of interest, however, that this aspect of his character actually heads the list of Julian's merits presented at 16.5:

In the first place he imposed upon himself and practised strict self-discipline... He behaved as if he were bound by the sumptuary laws which the Romans copied from the rhetrai or law code of Lycurgus. These were...revived by the dictator Sulla, who agreed with Democritus in thinking that 'fortune provides a man's table with luxury, virtue with a frugal meal'. This point was also stressed by Cato of Tusculum... 'Great worry about food,' he said, 'implies great indifference to virtue.' Finally...Julian forbade such delicacies as pheasant and sow's womb and udders to be ordered and served for him, and contented himself with the cheap food of the common soldiers, whatever it might be. (16.5.1-3)

The emphasis here appears to be both on the quality of the food and the quantity: both are clearly areas where moderation is a virtue. This is exemplified when Julian is travelling east to confront Constantius and escapes notice travelling a navigable stretch of the Danube because:

...having no need of luxuries but being able to make do with a scanty supply of ordinary food, [he] could pass towns and fortresses without stopping. In this he exemplified the fine saying of the old king Cyrus, who when he was asked by his host what food he should get ready, replied: 'Only bread, for I hope to dine near a stream'. (21.9.2)¹⁰

So here the virtue of moderation in quality and quantity of both food and drink brings Julian its own reward of undetected passage through hostile territory.

In times of hardship Julian was capable of even doing without his very moderate consumption and yet remaining efficient and effective (25.2.2, where he distributes his rations to his men) – something which Brandt suggests places him beyond what might be seen as the maximum of *temperantia* for the ordinary mortal, namely

⁹ Again, in general "*Temperantia* is particularly associated with Julian ... (14.11.28, 15.8.10, 16.5.1, 25.4.1)" (Seager, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven studies*, 18).

¹⁰ For commentary on Cyrus' *bon mot* and the passage as a whole, see J. den Boeft, D. den Hengst and H.C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXI* (Groningen 1991), 115-117.

when he or she gives in to physical desires only so far as this is necessary for self-survival.¹¹ This seems fair comment since Ammianus in his necrology for Julian, after here emphasising his moderation in sexual activity, eating, and sleeping, states that “he refrained from indulging even in such pleasures as human nature requires” (25.4.6).¹²

Two other emperors are praised for their dietary habits: Constantius, whose “style of living was frugal and temperate” and who “ate and drank only in moderation” so that “in consequence his health was so robust that he was rarely unwell” (21.16.5)¹³ – a more expected reward for this virtue perhaps than travelling undetected¹⁴ – and Valentinian. Ammianus’ praise for the latter seems to show a fairly broad understanding of what might constitute *temperantia*:¹⁵ “[Valentinian] loved elegant simplicity and took pleasure in tasteful but not profuse entertainments”¹⁶ (30.9.4).¹⁷

We move away from imperial necrologies for two final instances of moderation in consumption of food and drink as a virtue. The first suggests that the ambitious and upwardly-mobile of Rome might be truly happy if, rather than pursuing the lifestyle of the rich – which, once attained, allows them, *inter alia*, to “outdo kings in the lavishness of their table” (27.3.14) – they would

follow the example of some provincial bishops, whose extreme frugality in food and drink, simple attire, and downcast eyes demonstrate to the supreme god and his true worshippers the purity and modesty of their lives. (27.3.15)

The second concerns the quality of food consumption, here in terms of avoiding a “conglomeration [*colluvionem*] of diet” (27.4.14 R) – one of the factors that Ammianus says explains the long life of mountain-dwellers in Thrace.

¹¹ Brandt, *Moralische Werte*, 125.

¹² Julian’s concern for moderation in the consumption of food and drink may be reflected also in his sacking of the palace cooks in Constantinople as part of his reforms of the court (22.4.10).

¹³ Constantius is also commended for never eating fruit (21.16.7); Boeft et al. comment that: (a) “extravagant eating sometimes manifested itself in megalomania” and (b) “quite possibly Constantius’ abstinence from fruit has a medical background” (*Philological and Historical Commentary*, 255).

¹⁴ Ammianus actually makes the comment that: “Long experience confirms medical opinion that this is what happens with people who keep clear of dissipation and luxury” (21.16.5).

¹⁵ A point well made and discussed by Brandt (*Moralische Werte*, 124-125).

¹⁶ Rolfe gives the more specific translation of *epulis*, ‘banquets’.

¹⁷ Ammianus’ remark here specifically in relation to Valentinian and his eating habits stands in contrast with the following earlier and more general summary comment in the emperor’s necrology: “He occasionally feigned mildness, although his naturally hot temper made him more prone to severity; he forgot that a ruler of an empire should shun all extremes like a precipice” (30.8.2).

Eating and drinking habits as a vice

As Julian represents the model of virtue in the consumption of food and drink, so it is sectors of the people of Rome who constitute a prime target of Ammianus' criticism for gluttony and excessive use of wine.

Under the prefect Orfitus the people of Rome rioted because of the scarcity of wine (14.6.1), as they nearly did again for the same reason under Leontius (15.7.3). The poorest folk of Rome spend the entire night in wineshops (14.6.25) while the "gluttonous banquets" of the better-off are "passed over" (14.6.16 R)¹⁸. Later the prefect Ampelius is taken to task for not doing more than he did to correct the "the prevailing gluttony and gross immorality" (28.4.3) at work in Rome. He had merely issued orders banning the sale of wine before the fourth hour, the heating of water (to mix with wine), the sale of cooked meats before a fixed time and requiring that "no respectable person should be seen chewing in public" (28.4.4) – all, according to Ammianus, amongst the 'disreputable habits' and 'incurable vices' that had taken hold of the people of Rome (28.4.5). Under Ampelius too the majority of the commons of Rome

are addicted to gluttony. Attracted by the smell of cooking and the shrill voices of the women, who scream from cock-crow like a flock of starving peacocks, they stand about the courts on tip-toe, biting their fingers and waiting for the dishes to cool. Others fix their gaze on some revolting mess of meat until it is ready. They look like Democritus and a party of anatomists poring over the guts of a slaughtered beast, and demonstrating how future generations can avoid internal pain. (28.4.34)

There are obviously satirical, even theatrical, aspects to these descriptions of the classes of Rome but, as Matthews notes, this does not reduce their power as social comment.¹⁹

Ammianus' use of the present tense makes the reader wonder if this is criticism solely reserved for an earlier period or being levelled equally at contemporary Rome. This is certainly the case for a later remark about those who "after prematurely leaving their elementary school...haunt the doors of the rich and angle for the delights of a choice table" (30.4.14).

But, as Brandt points out,²⁰ Ammianus' criticism of gluttony and excessive love of wine covers all types of Roman society and so we move beyond the people of Rome itself to courtiers, common soldiers, emperors, and others.

¹⁸ Rolfe's translation of *mensarum uoragines* is preferred here to Hamilton's 'high living'.

¹⁹ J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London 1989), 416. Rees draws specific parallels from Juvenal to 14.6.16 and 28.4.34 under '(xix) Enormous appetites and excessive dinners' and to 14.6.25 under '(xxiv) Drinking' (R. Rees, "Ammianus Satiricus", in J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt [eds], *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* [London and New York 1999: 141-155], 148-149).

In his review of the vices of the Constantinopolitan court inherited by Julian from Constantius, Ammianus records the many corrupt activities and passions of the latter's staff. He notes that along with "mad pride" that "led them to stain their credit with the criminal pursuit of gain"

went the growth of gluttony and of prodigal expenditure on their bellies. Triumphs in battle were replaced by triumphs at table. (22.4.5)

Bands of troops are twice mentioned as indulging in excess: once during a forced lull in the siege of Aquileia when, after pillaging the surrounding area, "over-indulgence in stuffing and drinking led to loss of morale" (21.12.15) and once where Julian's excess in blood sacrifice makes huge quantities of meat available for consumption. Ammianus continues:

The result was seen in the intemperate habits of the troops, who were gorged with meat and demoralized by a craving for drink, so that almost every day some of them were carried through the streets on the shoulders of passers-by after debauches in the temples which called for punishment rather than indulgence. (22.12.6)

Then there is the sad case of the individual drunken soldier on Julian's Persian campaign "who had been rash enough to cross to the opposite bank [of the Euphrates] without orders" and "was seized and put to death by the enemy before our eyes" (24.1.16).

Jovian's is the sole necrology where over-indulgence in food and drink is listed as an imperial vice (25.10.15). In recording one possible cause of this emperor's death as acute indigestion after over-eating, Ammianus stipulates that this involved "an immoderate amount of food of different kinds" (25.10.13 R)²¹ – reminding us of the Thracian mountain tribe's avoidance of "a conglomeration of diet" (27.4.14 R).

Thus we arrive at our final instance of eating and drinking habits as a vice in Romans: Hyperechius, who, promoted by his friend Procopius to lead a section of his forces, "had formerly served in the court kitchens" "(that is, a servant of his belly and gullet)" (26.8.5).²²

In his discussion of Ammianus' treatment of those lacking moderation in eating and drinking, Brandt, focussing on the use of *taetras* and *irritamenta* at 28.4.3 and the comparison with peacocks at 28.4.34, argues convincingly that for Ammianus over-indulgence in food and drink signifies inadequate control of reason over the

²⁰ Brandt, *Moralische Werte*, 130.

²¹ Rolfe's translation of *colluvione ciborum* is preferred to Hamilton's 'eating to excess'.

²² The parenthesis, omitted by Hamilton, is supplied from Rolfe's translation.

appetite and that this connects the *edax* with irrational beasts.²³ This lack of control is incompatible with the Roman value of *decus* in the individual.²⁴ Despite the damaging results for the individual or groups of individuals of excessive indulgence in food – and the even more severe consequences of drinking too much – Brandt suggests that neither of these vices are as worrying for Ammianus as that of the excessive banquet table, which, he argues, as an instance of the Roman vice of *luxuria*, is connected for Ammianus to a continuing tendency towards the state becoming soft, a tendency fatal for the continued existence of the empire.²⁵

On the other hand, the link that Brandt points out between excess in the consumption of food and drink and beast-like lack of the control of reason immediately brings to mind descriptions (presented in the next section of this paper) of barbarian behaviour.²⁶ It can thus perhaps reasonably be argued that Ammianus, in his descriptions of the uncontrolled consumption of food and drink by individuals and groups of individuals (as presented above), is in fact identifying uncivilised behaviour within the empire itself – and as such this can be seen to be just as dire a threat to the empire’s continued existence as the *luxuria* evidenced in excessive banqueting, perhaps more dire still. As Seager comments in his *Conclusion*, “Ammianus saw barbarism in all its manifestations, both external and internal, as the ultimate threat to the Roman way of life”.²⁷

Dietary habits as a sign of savage versus civilised behaviour

This aspect of Ammianus’ concern with the consumption of food and alcohol is one that is revealed almost exclusively in his accounts of different regions and their inhabitants.²⁸ We shall deal first, in order of their appearance in the *Res Gestae*, with those tribes and/or nations that are seen by Ammianus as fairly clearly

²³ Brandt, *Moralische Werte*, 129.

²⁴ Brandt, *Moralische Werte*, 129-130.

²⁵ Brandt, *Moralische Werte*, 130-131.

²⁶ The European Alans (and others), the Huns, and the Asiatic Alans are all compared to beasts (respectively, 22.8.42, 31.2.11, and 31.2.18). On Ammianus’ use of bestial comparisons in general to emphasise negatively lack of rationality and control, see e.g. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 258; T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca and London 1998), 109-110. Wiedeman makes a thorough analysis of Ammianus’ use of comparisons with animals and concludes, *inter alia*: “Animal metaphors are applied to any person or group falling short of the standards of civilized human behaviour...” (T.E.J. Wiedeman, “Between Men and Beasts: Barbarians in Ammianus Marcellinus”, in I.S. Moxton, J.D. Smart and A.J. Woodman [eds], *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman historical writing* [Cambridge 1986: 189-201], 201).

²⁷ Seager, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven studies*, 131.

²⁸ There is only one instance of comment on barbarian food consumption that is not in a digressive description: a German king, Hortarius, “invited all the kings, princes, and kinglets to a banquet and detained them until the third watch, prolonging the feasting after the native fashion” (28.2.13 R).

uncivilised or savage and then with others whom he presents as having more or less civilised qualities.

The Saracens (in an excursus on more of their customs),²⁹ rapacious as kites and “desirable neither as friends or enemies” (14.4.1), never plough or till the land but are constantly on the move (14.4.3). They feed off the land (plants, game, birds they are able to catch), “drink an abundance of milk, which is their main sustenance”, and Ammianus has seen some who “were wholly unacquainted with grain and wine” (14.4.6).

Being nomadic, feeding off the land, never ploughing or tilling, and drinking milk are all characteristics that have been identified by scholars as typically defining characteristics in the Greek and Roman tradition of the uncivilised versus the civilised.³⁰ Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to trace this tradition, commonalities with Herodotos – seemingly the context of their first written appearance – will at least be reported. Thus in the present instance we can note that the latter three of these characteristics appear in Herodotos’ description of the Massagetai in *The Histories* at 1.216, while the Scythians are reported as being nomadic and milk-drinkers at 4.2 and the Androphagoi as being nomadic at 4.106.

The existence of the tradition naturally begs the question of veracity in the accounts we are considering: is Ammianus simply drawing on the tradition or is he bringing more reliable knowledge to bear (witnesses’ reports, his own autopsy) – or is he doing both? Again it lies beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to resolve such questions but again also we shall report relevant observations, and

²⁹ The first account was given in one of the lost books (14.4.2). On this and other digressions in these books, see A.M. Emmett, “The Digressions in the Lost Books of Ammianus Marcellinus”, in B. Croke and A.M. Emmett (eds), *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney 1983), 42-53.

³⁰ In more recent times Shaw has gone so far as to argue that this opposition and its underlying prejudice was more than part of the tradition and in fact constituted an ideology. However, King points out a number of problems with this proposal (respectively: B.D. Shaw, “‘Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk’: the Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad”, *Ancient Society* 13/14 [1982/3], 5-31; C. King, “The Veracity of Ammianus Marcellinus’ Description of the Huns”, *American Journal of Ancient History* 12 [1987], 77-95). Although leaving to one side, as we have, the issue of tracing the specifics of Ammianus’ use of earlier sources in the Greek and Roman tradition, it is nevertheless worth noting that in the Latin historiographic tradition examples of the link between food and civilisation are to be found in each of the three ‘great’ Roman historians, Livy, Sallust and Tacitus. Livy blames the army from Asia under Manlius Volso for importing the beginnings of foreign luxury from Syria into Rome (39.6.6), including furniture and furnishings, female flute-players, and a taste for fine food that changed the cook from being considered the least valuable of slaves to one whose service came to be regarded as an art (39.6.9). Sallust (*Cat.* 11) expresses a similar concern about the effect on Roman virtue of Sulla’s victories in Syria which introduced the army to the vices of women, wine and fine art. Finally Tacitus’ account of the year 22 CE begins with an episode on *luxus mensae* (*Ann.* 3.52 ff) in which the moral decay linked to Julio-Claudian luxury is contrasted in a forward-looking digression with Vespasian’s old-fashioned provincial moderation and the prospect of *luxus* dying out (*Ann.* 3.55.1-5).

here we may note Matthews' view that Ammianus' words "I have seen many of them who were wholly unacquainted with grain and wine" (14.4.6 R) demonstrate personal experience.³¹ If Matthews' view is correct, it would then appear that in his description of the Saracens Ammianus is mixing elements drawn from the tradition just mentioned with others relying upon his own autopsy.

The Scordisci, by whose "savageness the Roman state was often sorely troubled", are mentioned in an excursus on "the six provinces of Thrace and their peoples" (27.4.4 R). In ancient times the Scordisci practised human sacrifice on their prisoners, offering them to Bellona and Mars, and drank human blood from the skulls of their dead victims (27.4.4 R).

Here, in reference to the two issues raised immediately above, we may note that: (a) Herodotos mentions in his description of the Scythians at 4.62 how they sacrifice one out of a hundred of their prisoners of war to Ares and also (at 4.65) how they drink (though not blood) from their enemies' skulls; (b) Ammianus prefaces these remarks on the Scordisci with the phrase "as ancient history declares" (27.4.4 R).

In a description of Thrace that commences at 22.8 Ammianus presents the lifestyle of "the European [Alans], the Costobocae, and innumerable Scythian tribes" and notes that:

Of these only a small part live on the fruits of the earth; all the rest roam over desert wastes, which never knew plough nor seeds...and they feed after the foul manner of wild beasts. (22.8.42 R)

As noted above, being nomadic is a Herodotean trait of both the Androphagoi (4.106) and the Massagetai, who also never sow (1.216).

A later excursus is devoted to the Huns, Alans and other nations of Asiatic Scythia (31.2). The Huns "are quite abnormally savage" (31.2.1) and

...their way of life is so rough that they have no use for fire or seasoned food, but live on the roots of wild plants and the half-raw flesh of any sort of animal, which they warm a little by placing it between their thighs and the backs of their horses. (31.2.3)

The Huns too are nomadic and plant no grain:

None of them ploughs or ever touches a plough handle. They have no fixed abode, no home or law or settled manner of life but wander like refugees with the wagons in which they live. (31.2.10)

³¹ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 380.

like “unreasoning beasts...entirely at the mercy of the maddest impulses” and “totally ignorant of the distinction between right and wrong” (31.2.11), they are indeed a “wild race” (31.2.12).

The characteristics of being nomadic, non-agricultural, eating wild meat and plants have already been referred to Herodotos.³² Here we can add that Herodotos’ account of the Androphagoi (at 4.106) includes these words: οὔτε δίκην νομίζοντες οὔτε νόμῳ οὐδενὶ χρεώμενοι (“neither practising justice nor living under any law”).

On the question of veracity, we might begin with the question of the ‘steak à la Hun’. It has been the subject of comment and explanation by various scholars,³³ and the attempt at humour in our title is, of course, based on Ammianus’ suggestion that the meat was being warmed for consumption as opposed to being used to heal wounds or soothe chaffing as such scholars have suggested. A recent study by King comments that “Ammianus had heard about the meat on the horses, backs, but did not have the knowledge of Hunnic culture to explain why it was there”.³⁴ The study goes on to point out the inaccuracy of Ammianus’ assertions that the Huns lacked fire, ate raw food, and never farmed;³⁵ it suggests also, in case we might be wondering why Ammianus presents the Huns as he does, that

portraying the Huns as subhuman and bestial works well with Ammianus’ overall image of the Huns as savages so terrifying that even the Goths that defeated the Romans at Adrianople could not face them.³⁶

In the same excursus on the Huns, Alans and others, we meet the Anthropophagi of Asiatic Scythia. These are nomads “who live on human flesh” (31.2.15) – both characteristics of the already-mentioned Androphagoi, described by Herodotos at 4.106.

The Asiatic Alans are made up of various peoples who share similar traits, including being nomadic and “their wild way of life” (31.2.17).

³² Above, on the Saracens.

³³ E.g. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 337-338; J.O. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in their history and culture*, M. Knight (ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1973), 14-15, as part of the author’s overall assessment of Ammianus’ account of the Huns, where he suggests a heavy reliance on the Augustan historian, Pompeius Trogus, 9-15.

³⁴ King, “The Veracity of Ammianus”, 80.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ King, “The Veracity of Ammianus”, 82. In relation to King’s point, however, it should be noted that Ammianus shows the Goths as being frightened (in the company of some Huns and Alans) also by a Saracen. The occasion is the Gothic attempt on Constantinople, narrated towards the end of the *Res Gestae*: “One of [the Saracens], a man with long hair wearing nothing but a loincloth, drew his dagger and hurled himself with blood-curdling yells into the midst of the Gothic host. He cut a man’s throat, then put his lips to the wound and sucked the streaming blood. This appalling sight terrified the barbarians...” (31.16.6).

they have no huts and make no use of the plough, but live upon meat and plenty of milk. They use wagons...and move in these over the endless desert. And when they come to a grassy place, they arrange their carts in a circle and feed like wild animals... (31.2.18)

In introducing the Asiatic Alans Ammianus notes that they “are the ancient Massagetae” (31.2.12), leading us back once again to Herodotus and his description of these neighbours of the Scythians (1.216) who sow nothing, live on beasts and fish, and are milk-drinkers. To these characteristics of their dietary habits Ammianus has added that they “feed like wild animals” (31.2.18) – reminding us of his earlier description of the European Alans (and others) at 22.8.42.³⁷

The Alans, however, do keep cattle as the above passage suggests,³⁸ and this is perhaps one reason why Ammianus comments that, although nimble and active warriors “and in every way a match for the Huns”, they “are less savage in their habits and way of life” (31.2.21).³⁹

The Gauls, on the other hand, are not nomadic and, though fond of quarrelling and truculent (15.12.1), “all alike are clean and neat” (15.12.2). They are courageous warriors (15.12.3) but

As a race they are given to drink, and are fond of a number of liquors that resemble wine; and some of the baser sort wander about aimlessly in a fuddled state of perpetual intoxication... (15.12.4)

Interestingly here the issue is not what is consumed by the Gauls, as in the case of the ethnic groups examined thus far, so much as the amount that they consume, and even then the strongest criticism (alcohol-induced mindlessness) is limited to some of them only.⁴⁰

The final excursus providing comment on eating and drinking habits is the extremely lengthy one concerning the Persian kingdom, its provinces and their inhabitants (23.6). Beginning at 23.6.75, the latter receive a mixed review, often heartily condemned (e.g. for their venery [23.6.77]), their harshness and cruelty

³⁷ The Latin expressions are quite close: “ferarum taetro ritu uescuntur” (22.8.42); “ferino ritu uescuntur” (31.2.18).

³⁸ See also 31.2.19.

³⁹ King, however, asks the question: “Were the Huns really like the Alans, or does Ammianus link them because Herodotus linked the Scythians and the Massagetae?”; the issue is discussed further in a note (King, “The Veracity of Ammianus”, 85 and n. 40).

⁴⁰ Wiedeman suggests that this shows Ammianus is able to set aside the traditional commonplaces of barbarian dietary habits when he wishes to do so (Wiedeman, “Between Men and Beasts”, 194). We shall suggest below that Ammianus in fact views them differently from the groups we have examined to date.

[23.6.80]) but also commended (e.g. for “their restraint and caution” [23.6.78], for their military prowess [23.6.83]).⁴¹ Specifically on their dietary habits Ammianus writes:

The luxury of an elegant table and especially indulgence in drink they shun like the plague. Only the king has a set hour for dining. Apart from him every man times his meals by his stomach. When this gives the signal he eats whatever is available, and once he has satisfied his hunger no one loads his digestion with superfluous food. (23.6.77)

Teitler has subjected Ammianus’ digression on the Persians to a detailed analysis,⁴² and found that, although Ammianus often draws his information from the tradition on the Persians that once again leads back to Herodotos, he also includes observations that are completely different – leading Teitler to conclude that Ammianus is drawing upon his own experience in this excursus and that it is, therefore, “the result of both *lecta* and *visa*”.⁴³ The significance of Teitler’s work for us is that it shows Herodotos and the tradition that developed after him as portraying the Persians as being very fond of wine and as making important decisions under the influence of excessive alcohol.⁴⁴ Ammianus, arguably on the basis of his own autopsy, states the opposite. Similarly our own limited research, following up references covered in Teitler’s article to works using the tradition on the Persians before Ammianus,⁴⁵ reveals no earlier references to the Persians using their stomach to designate mealtimes.

It is clear from the passages cited above that dietary habits are an important characteristic for Ammianus in describing different tribes and nations. This is not in itself surprising – as Wiedeman writes: “Dietary habits are among the more obvious ways in which one group of people can differentiate itself from another”.⁴⁶ On the other hand it is also clear that, with the exception of his treatment of the Gauls and Persians, Ammianus is using characteristics that are drawn from the tradition of descriptions of barbarians that goes back to Herodotos, and that his use of these across the range of groups gives us little hope for their veracity.⁴⁷ How is

⁴¹ This is not to suggest that other accounts we have mentioned do not sometimes have positive aspects (e.g. the Asiatic Alans, as noted, or even the Huns, who are “the most terrible of all warriors” [31.2.9]); the point is rather the amount of positive comment on the Persians.

⁴² H. Teitler, “*Visa vel lecta?*: Ammianus on Persia and the Persians”, in Drijvers and Hunt, *The Late Roman World and its Historian*, 216-223.

⁴³ Teitler, “*Visa vel lecta*”, 222.

⁴⁴ Teitler, “*Visa vel lecta*”, 218-221; Herodotos 1.133.

⁴⁵ Teitler, “*Visa vel lecta*”, 220 and n. 20.

⁴⁶ Wiedeman, “Between Men and Beasts”, 189.

⁴⁷ In general on the use by Ammianus of ethnic equations, identifications of peoples of his own time with those he read about in earlier literature, see King, “The Veracity of Ammianus”, 83-85.

this to be explained? It seems probable in fact that (a) they are not being used for the purposes of descriptive ethnography so much as for the purposes of moral evaluation, in order to and as part of defining the ‘otherness’ of these ethnic groups in contrast to the civilised Romans; and (b) they also reflect Ammianus’ desire to conform to the traditional requirements of his genre by including these traditional descriptors of savagery within his digressions on such groups.⁴⁸ It is in any event evident that these dietary practices are for Ammianus, as for those predecessors he is drawing upon, amongst the key defining characteristics of the uncivilised versus the civilised.

Turning now to the two final passages cited, on the Gauls and on the Persians, the point has been made for the Gauls, and holds equally well for the Persians, that the issue is not one so much of the uncultivated nature of what they eat or drink but of the amount that they eat or drink: the Gauls, at least some of them, over-indulge in alcohol while the Persians avoid excess in both eating and drinking. This different sort of concern brings these two groups closer to the criteria being applied to Romans, in that they concern the value of moderate consumption as a virtue and excessive consumption as a vice. The fact also that both groups are non-nomadic, and by comparison with the other groups covered display a greater number of civilised characteristics,⁴⁹ tends to lend weight to this view: they are being treated by Ammianus more like Romans and less like savages.

Concluding remarks

It turns out, then, that the consumption of food and drink is treated by Ammianus in quite deliberate and significant ways. For, although in the military-political context he may present in this regard more or less what the reader might expect (yet even here introduces value judgements on foresight and indeed its absence), habits of eating and drinking are revealed also as an intrinsic aspect of his value system and a regular means of judging the moral worth not only of individuals and groups or sections of society but also of tribes and nations as a whole – and in both of these categories, even though the first covers only Romans, the link exists to a broader judgement: that which is to be made between the savage and the civilised.

⁴⁸ These points are well argued by Wiedemann in his “Between Men and Beasts”. See also D. Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London and New York 2002), 27-28. On (a) only, see similarly O. Longo, “The Food of Others”, in *Food: A culinary history from antiquity to the present*, under the direction of J.-L. Flandrin and M. Montanari, English edn by A. Sonnenfeld, trans. by C. Botsford (New York 1999: 153-162), 155.

⁴⁹ The cleanliness of the Gauls and their implied viticulture, for example, and the commendations for the Persians as already noted in the discussion above.

John Haldon

Feeding the Army: Food and transport in Byzantium, ca 600-1100¹

It is well-established that in pre-modern societies the vast majority of people lived off produce generated within a few miles of their home, whether we are speaking of the populations of ancient towns and cities, with city lands and farms cultivating crops to be sold in local markets or distributed through some other means, or rural populations producing their own food. Limited local exchange, involving journeys of at most a couple of days, certainly existed everywhere that conditions allowed, and very few advanced peasant economies – and I would describe the mediaeval economy as primarily an advanced peasant economy – are entirely autarkic. Neighbouring communities exchanged goods, products and services to meet demand and taste, while larger urban centres attracted both intermediate and long-distance trade. A glance through the relevant chapters of either the recently-published *Economic History of Byzantium*, for example, or Michael McCormick's *Origins of the European Economy*, will soon demonstrate this fact. And the transportation of such goods took place in exactly the same way as happens today in such societies – on donkey, pony, mule, camel or human backs and shoulders, occasionally on small carts and wagons drawn by mules or oxen. But the poorest peasants did not normally have access to such transport, and anyway had little if anything to exchange; while the need for or ability to exchange, for example in the market, depended also on legal status. So although there were certainly important exceptions at times, and although this picture varied considerably from locality to locality, and region to region, it seems nevertheless to be generally true that large-scale, bulk transportation across medium and long distances was the preserve of those institutions that could afford it and that needed it. In the case of the Roman and Byzantine worlds, as well as many other societies which supported effective states, that meant primarily the state and, in particular, its armies. And since we do have some reasonably solid figures for the costs and physical characteristics of military transportation, the army provides a useful insight into some aspects of the

¹ This paper is based on work originally carried out for the workshop “The logistics of crusading”, held at the University of Sydney in October 2002, but with a somewhat different emphasis for the Adelaide Byzantine Studies symposium in 2003. I would like to thank the organisers of both meetings for inviting me to contribute. A more detailed discussion will appear in the publication arising from the Sydney meeting, entitled “Roads and communications in Byzantine Asia Minor: wagons, horses, supplies”.

problem of supply, demand, distribution and consumption of foodstuffs, as well as other types of requirement.

I do not propose to go into the question of the mechanisms of supplying armies in Byzantium – that is a subject which has been addressed elsewhere and which, while a good deal of research remains to be done, we do understand pretty well, at least up to the eleventh century.² What is less well understood is what the figures in our mediaeval sources mean when converted to modern equivalents – weights and measures are especially problematic, as we shall see in a moment; times per distance for travel are also difficult to assess in many cases; while mean rates of consumption of provisions remains a field of considerable disagreement.

First of all, therefore, the evidence for the military diet. This is fairly straightforward, although there remain some important gaps in our knowledge of soldiers' diet in the middle Byzantine periods, but I will outline what we think we know before going on to how soldiers were actually supplied with what they ate.

In the fourth to sixth centuries, the evidence suggests that soldiers' rations were consumed on a three-day rotation: bread for 1 day in 3, *bucellatum* (hard tack) for 2 days in 3, salt pork for 1 day in 3, mutton for 2 days in 3, wine and sour wine on alternate days. Other foods such as fish, cheese and oil, depending on context and availability, could also be eaten. The weight of such rations varied, but the figure of 1 Roman pound (327 g) of meat and/or 2-3 Roman pounds (654-981 g) of bread *per diem* per man given in one document for stationary troops seems to have been standard into the seventh century in Egypt; and the limited evidence suggests that this was more-or-less constant in the preceding and following periods. The tenth-century treatise on skirmishing warfare notes that basic rations for soldiers consisted of bread and either cheese or dried and salted meat.³ And although the amount of meat proportional to the rest of the diet might well be minimal under campaign conditions, a basic diet of grain supplemented by oil still provides a reasonable amount of nutrition over the medium term, in view of the fact that ancient strains of wheat and barley had considerably higher protein content than most modern strains. Furthermore, hard wheats – which were introduced into the eastern Mediterranean region from the seventh century – have a somewhat higher protein content than soft wheats, and produce a flour better suited to bread-

² See J.F. Haldon, "The Organisation and Support of an Expeditionary Force: Manpower and Logistics in the Middle Byzantine Period", in N. Oikonomidès (ed.), *Byzantium at War, 9th-12th Centuries* (Athens 1998), 111-151; and "Chapters II, 44 and 45 of the *Book of Ceremonies*. Theory and practice in tenth-century military administration", *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (Paris 2000), 201-352.

³ For the tenth-century text: G. Dagron, H. Mihăescu (eds), *Le traité sur la Guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963-969)*. Texte établi par Gilbert Dagron et Haralambie Mihăescu, trad. et comm. par G. Dagron (Paris 1986) (text, pp. 28-135); also edited with an English translation as *Skirmishing*, ed. G.T. Dennis, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*. Text, trans. and notes (CFHB 25 = Dumbarton Oaks Texts 9, Washington, DC 1985), pp. 137-239 (text, pp. 144-238), see § 8. 2.

making.⁴ This also means that some modern authorities overestimate the weight of grain required by mediaeval European and near eastern armies, since they ignore the considerable differences between the nutritional values of the ancient grains which would have been used, and modern grains, upon which their calculations are frequently based.⁵

Soldiers were issued with two main varieties of bread: simple baked loaves, and double-baked ‘biscuit’, referred to in late Roman times as *bucellatum* and by the Byzantines as *paximadion* or *paximation*. In campaign conditions, it was normally the soldiers themselves who milled and baked this. The hard tack was more easily preserved over a longer period, was easy to produce, and demanded fairly simple milling and baking skills.⁶ Hard tack could be baked in field ovens – *klibanoi* – or simply laid in the ashes of camp-fires, an advantage when speed was essential. A tenth-century treatise notes that the best such bread was baked in thin oval loaves cooked in a field-oven, then dried in the sun.⁷ Hand-mills were a requirement of the Byzantine infantry-unit baggage-train, at least in theory, and such mills are known archaeologically from the later Roman period.⁸

⁴ 11%-15%, compared with 8%-10% in soft wheats.

⁵ See K.D. White, *Roman Farming* (London 1970), and for Byzantium from the seventh century, J.L. Teall, “The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire”, *DOP* 13 (1959), 87-139, see 117-132. On nutritional values, P.J. Reynolds, *Iron-Age Farm: The butser experiment* (London 1979). On the size and value of Roman military rations, see L. Foxhall and H.A. Forbes, “Sitometreia: the role of grain as a staple food in classical Antiquity”, *Chiron* 12 (1982), 41-90; C.E.P. Adams, “Supplying the Roman army: *O. Petr.* 245”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 109 (1995), 119-124. For some useful comparative statistics, see M. Van Crefeld, *Supplying war: Logistics from Wallerstein to Patton* (Cambridge 1977), 24, 34; V. Aksan, “Feeding the Ottoman troops on the Danube, 1768-1774”, *War and Society* 13/1 (1995), 1-14; D. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley 1978), 123-126. For hard grain, see esp. A.M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World* (Cambridge 1983), 20. Note that Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 126-127, overcalculates the bread-weights.

⁶ For the late Roman period, see R.W. Davies, “The Roman military diet”, *Britannia* 2 (1971), 122-142; and Jones, *LRE*, 628f.; and for Byzantine military diet, see T. Kolias, “Eßgewohnheiten und Verpflegung im byzantinischen Heer”, in W. Hörandner, J. Koder, O. Kresten, E. Trapp (eds), *Byzantios. Festschrift für Herbert Hunger zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna 1984: 193-202), 197-199.

⁷ A. Dain (ed.), *Sylloge Tacticorum, quae olim ‘inedita Leonis Tactica’ dicebatur* (Paris 1938), §57.2.

⁸ See *Sylloge Tacticorum*, §38.12; and Davies, “Roman military diet”, 126, n. 31. Davies notes that handmills can be operated with considerable efficiency: experiments with handmills from the Roman fort at Saalburg demonstrated that 4 to 6 men could mill up to 220 pounds of grain into flour in one hour: cf. *Saalburg-Jarhbücher* 3 (1912), 75-95. Compare the *Sylloge Tacticorum* text with Maurice, *Strat.* 12 B, 6.5 (*Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, G.T. Dennis (ed.), trans. E. Gamillscheg [CFHB 17, Vienna 1981]; Eng. trans.: G.T. Dennis, *Maurice’s Strategikon. Handbook of Byzantine military strategy* [Philadelphia 1984]); Leo, *Tac.* 6.27; 5.6 (*Leonis imperatoris tactica*, in: PG 107, 672-1120; also R. Vári [ed.], *Leonis imperatoris tactica* I [proem., const. 1-11]; II [const. 12-13, 14.1-38] [*Sylloge Tacticorum Graecorum* III, Budapest 1917-1922]).

The chief grains employed comprised wheat, barley and millet, although other grains were used, depending upon both the region and the period.⁹ Barley was regarded primarily as hard feed for livestock, although it, and millet, may have been regularly used for the hard-tack *paximadion*. The military treatises often refer to the soldiers' baggage-train carrying both barley and millet, although wheat was the normal ingredient for bread. But it is not the case that meat – either fresh, when in camp or garrison, or dried/salted, when in the field – was not also a regular element, even if reduced to a minimum in campaigning contexts – a tenth-century treatise refers to dried fish as an element in the provisions to be taken on expeditions.¹⁰

All the evidence would suggest, therefore, that the basic ration per man per day weighed approx. 1.3 kg. Equally, there can be no doubt that it must have varied somewhat according to the conditions of service, so this should be seen as an average – it may have increased or decreased according to circumstances. This is a figure found in all mediaeval and early modern armies for which there is appropriate evidence, from the western armies of the crusades through to the Ottoman armies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and European armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹¹

But such calculations depend on a range of problematic variables. Thus, while the measure used in the majority of texts dealing with grain from the middle Byzantine period is the *modios*, there were several different *modioi*. Since the relationship between the various *modioi* and other measures, such as the *litra* (the Roman pound) and other late ancient values for weight and volume – such as the *artaba* – remain unclear, it is not possible simply to read off the values from the texts in question. Furthermore, the Byzantine version of the Roman lb itself seems to have varied by as much as 5% in some documents (10th c.). Some acceptable equivalences have been established, however. The important measure with respect to military rations was the so-called *annônikos modios*, valued at 26.6 Roman lbs (@ 320 g:lb, i.e. 18.75 lbs/8.7 kg),¹² and probably used to calculate the military provision ration, as suggested by middle Byzantine figures for pack-animal loads.¹³

If we accept these conclusions and values, we can say a little more about the bread ration of the soldiers. One late Roman papyrus document states clearly that 80 (Roman) lbs of 'dry' bread (i.e. 25.6 kg/56.3 lbs) could be baked from 1 *artaba*

⁹ See Teall, "Grain supply", 91-92, 99-100.

¹⁰ Davies, "Roman military diet", 126ff., and Kolias, "Eßgewohnheiten", 199-200.

¹¹ Western evidence: J. France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000-1300* (London 1999), 35, and for Ottoman figures, see R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700* (London 1999), 71, 88f.

¹² E. Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie* (Handbuch d. Altertumswiss. 12.4 = Byzantinisches Handbuch iv) (Munich 1970), 99.

¹³ Haldon, "Expeditionary force" (as in n. 2 above).

of wheat,¹⁴ and we know that 1 *artaba* of wheat is the equivalent of 3.3 ‘flat *modioi*’ (*modioi xystoi*) @ 26.6 Roman lbs (that is, the same value as the later *annōnikos modios*), that equals 87.78 Roman lbs (or 28.7 kg/63.2 lbs). Pre-modern milling was less efficient than modern processes, and a greater proportion of bran and wheat-germ would be included in the flour. In campaign-conditions, in addition, the milling process tends to be both more rapid and produce a far less refined flour. But after milling or grinding, an average return in flour of between 75%-90% on weight of grain would result, somewhat higher than the 72% produced by modern milling and extractive processes. Using tenth-century Byzantine evidence, and assuming the least favourable conditions for grinding, 1 *annōnikos modios* of grain (26.6 Roman lbs) would produce between 20 and 24 Roman lbs of flour.¹⁵ In modern baking, a return of at least 2:1 on weight of bread: flour is usual (because rolling and milling techniques produce a greater amount of damage to the starch elements, thus increasing water-absorbency and thus overall weight). In ancient and mediaeval bread-making, although fine white bread (using only about 75% of the product of grinding and milling) was certainly produced for the luxury market,¹⁶ the degree of water-absorption was much less, especially in the case of hard-tack or biscuit. The return on flour per weight of dough produced was, in consequence, lower, varying from 1:1 to 1:1.75, depending on type of grain milled, the degrees of refinement of the milling process, and other variables.¹⁷ The ratio of 1 *artaba*, or some 87 Roman lbs of grain to 80 Roman lbs of bread bears these figures out.

What about the requirements of the livestock that accompanied the armies? Here we have a range of variables to deal with: cavalry mounts, pack-ponies, mules and donkeys, oxen and perhaps camels. Modern authorities vary very considerably on the minimal and optimal feed required for each, so that we need to take account of at least two sets of figures in any calculation we make about the provisioning of an army accompanied by substantial numbers of animals – that is, in effect, most mediaeval armies. Horses and mules require considerably more in weight of

¹⁴ *P. Oxy.* 1920 (B.P. Grenfell, A.S. Hunt et al. [eds], *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* [London 1898ff]), with the comments of A.C. Johnson, L.C. West, *Byzantine Egypt: Economic studies* (Princeton 1949), 183. This assumes that the Roman lb (327.45 g) is meant.

¹⁵ On returns on milling and grinding, see D.W. Kent-Jones, “Processing of Major Food Groups: Cereals and other Starch Products”, in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 19: *Macropaedia* (15th edn, Chicago 1995: 346-355) 347-348; and L. Smith, *Flour Milling Technology* (3rd edn, London 1945).

¹⁶ M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI^e au XI^e siècle. Propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris 1992), 28-29; Ph. Koukoules, “Ὀνόματα καὶ εἶδη ἄρτων κατὰ τοὺς Βυζαντινοὺς χρόνους”, *Epeteris Etaireias Byzantinon Spoudon* 5 (1928), 36-52, esp. 36-41; Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν βίος καὶ πολιτισμὸς* (Athens 1948-1951), vol. 5, 12ff.

¹⁷ For statistics on baking, see the appropriate chapters in S. Matz (ed.), *The Chemistry and Technology of Cereals as Food and Feed* (London 1959); and D.W. Kent-Jones, “Processing of Major Food Groups”, 350 ff.

provisions than soldiers. Since they require a much greater weight of supplies than men, proportional to their carrying capacity, they are relatively inefficient sources of transport. Roman military mounts required something in the order of 20 lbs (9 kg) of fodder per day in rest conditions: 5-6 lbs (2.2-2.7 kg) barley and a further 10-15 lbs (4.5-6.8 kg) hay or grazing.¹⁸ The area required for grazing depended on several factors – quality of pasturage, seasonal variations, and so forth. The basic requirements per horse amount to four to five hours' grazing per day, so that twenty horses would graze one acre of medium-quality pasture in that time. On campaign, they were probably fed less. But they need also an average of 22.75-36.4 litres of water per day – the amount varies according to temperature, nature of work and so on.¹⁹ The availability of grazing obviously depends upon regional and seasonal variations: where fodder had to be transported in addition to grain, mobility would be drastically limited and transport costs increased.

We can tabulate all this information as follows:

Tabulation of feed requirements for animals

	<i>Hard fodder</i>	<i>dry/green fodder</i>		<i>pasturage</i>	<i>water</i>
donkey	1.5 kg	5.0 kg	or	10.0 kg	20 ltr
mule	2.0 kg	6.0 kg	or	12.0 kg	20 ltr
pack-pony	2.0 kg	5.5 kg	or	11.0 kg	20 ltr
horse	2.5 kg	7.0 kg	or	14.0 kg	30 ltr
ox	7.0 kg	11.0 kg	or	22.0 kg	30 ltr

These results are slightly lower than modern feed requirements, a reflection of both different breeds of animal, on the one hand, and the problem of averaging from sets of non-comparable figures found in different types of source. All authorities admit, however, that they are reasonable for wartime conditions, even if rations might be more generous when animals were not in service.

We can now move on to discuss the overall demands of the army on the one hand, and how these demands were transported, both to the forces which needed them, and by the armies as they marched in campaign.

First of all, some indications of total requirements. Figures for mediaeval armies are notoriously unreliable, and one of the functions of the project I will discuss in

¹⁸ See Ann Hyland, *Equus. The horse in the Roman world* (London 1990), 90; followed by K.R. Dixon and P. Southern, *The Roman Cavalry. From the first to the third century A.D.* (London 1992), 208-217, esp. 210-211. Hyland underestimates the amount of barley required, however: see Haldon, "Expeditionary force" (cited at n. 2 above), 126-127 and n. 57.

¹⁹ Twelve horses per acre is a modern ratio and reflects requirements for animals bred under modern conditions. See I.P. Roberts, *The Horse* (New York 1905), 360ff. The water requirements for horses are discussed by Hyland, *Equus*, 96; and see also Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 127; C. Gladitz, *Horse Breeding in the Medieval World* (Dublin 1997), 127-128.

the final part of my paper will be to develop a model that can compensate for this. In the meantime we rely on the numbers given in our written sources, tempered by our own common sense – on a somewhat subjective approach, therefore. But there are some firm figures that can be believed. Thus we have very exact figures for the total number of men involved in the expedition of 911-912 sent against northern Syria (generally also referred to erroneously as the ‘Cretan expedition’).

The total personnel involved in the expedition amounted to some 46,964, including all the oarsmen and sailors. Even by Byzantine standards, this was an absolutely mammoth undertaking, probably one of the largest single expeditions undertaken in this period. The documents from this event state that a total of 40,000 *modioi* of barley (20,000 each from Thrakesion and Anatolikon/Kibyrrhaiotai) and 40,000 *modioi* of wheat, as well as 60,000 *modioi* of flour were to be supplied, in addition to further unspecified quantities of *paxamiation*, wheat and flour. It is not stated whether the flour is wheat flour or barley flour (or even millet).²⁰ Leaving aside the unspecified quantities for the moment, the 40,000 *modioi* of wheat and 60,000 *modioi* of flour would total, after the milling of the wheat (i.e. deducting an average 15% weight of the wheat as loss through grinding), some 94,000 *modioi* of flour. Assuming the *modios* in question is the *annônikos modios* (which is probable, but not certain), this would produce about 2.54 million Roman lbs of flour (817,000 kg/1,762,500 lbs), which would bake into *ca* 2.6 million Roman lbs of bread (approx. 818,000 kg/1,770,000 lbs). On the assumption that the minimum requirement of 1.3 kg of bread per day per man (just under 3 lbs) was respected, this is enough for a maximum of 12-13. If a portion of this flour were double baked as biscuit or *paxamiation*, the overall available resource would increase by about 25%-30%. This gives us a reasonable idea of the quantities we are dealing with.

The implications of feeding and supplying such large forces are a little difficult to grasp, so a few smaller cases might better illustrate the point. Thus a small force (roughly the size of the ‘typical’ thematic army of the ninth-tenth centuries) of about 4,000 cavalry with 1,000 remounts would require 16,200 kg of grain (about 16 tons) per day (i.e. 4,000 men x 1.3 kg per day + 5,000 horses x 2.2 kg per day); an army of 10,000, made up of 6,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry accompanied by 1,000 remounts, would need 24,000 kg (23.5 tons) per day (10,000 men consuming 1.3 kg per day + 5,000 horses x 2.2 kg per day). These are minima, assuming that the conversion loss in milling from grain to flour of *ca* 15% is compensated by the lower water-absorption of the flour and thus by the flour : bread ratio during the baking process. In addition, such forces would need about 200 acres of medium

²⁰ See *De Cer.* 659.7-12 (*Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae libri duo*, ed. J.J. Reiske [CSHB, Bonn 1829]) (new edn: Haldon, “Chapters II, 44 and 45 of the *Book of Ceremonies*”, 211-213, cited n. 2 above).

grazing or its equivalent and 150,000 litres of water for the horses, and roughly a further 8,000 or 20,000 litres, respectively (and as absolute minima), for the soldiers. I have probably underestimated the number of remounts and spare horses.

With these calculations as a starting point, we can establish the minimal needs for any size of army for any length of time. The small force of 4,000 cavalry would thus need some 243,000 kg of grain (about 239 tons) to stay in the field for 15 days; the 10,000 strong army of mixed cavalry and infantry would need 360,000 kg (about 354 tons) for the same period. Larger forces would require proportionately more – the expeditionary force of 911, totaling just under 47,000 men, would have required 2.6 million Roman lbs of bread (approx. 818,000 kg/1,770,000 lbs or 790 tons) for just 12 days, a figure which excludes the needs of any animals that were taken.

The problem of where such resources were taken from is one that has remained largely unasked, except for generalisations about grain or cereal-producing areas of the empire. To establish more exactly how this logistical operation worked we need to know a great deal more about land-use and levels of agrarian productivity, and this is, unfortunately, information that hardly appears at all in Byzantine texts. But there is comparable information from other parts of Europe and more importantly from the same areas from the early modern period in particular. It should, therefore, be possible, taking into account changes in agricultural technology where appropriate, as well as changes in crop types and land-use, to work out some idea of where and in what quantities Byzantines, for example, produced grains, and what might have been available to support transient populations such as armies.

It is possible to establish some broad guidelines. For example, historians have established some relationships between cultivated area and yield, which can help us establish how much land, of appropriate quality soil, cultivated by how many man days of labour, would be required to provide the sort of provisions we have discussed so far. There are several problems of methodology here, of course. Ancient sources were not interested in the sort of data we need for this. Land itself does not have a fixed capacity, but produces greater or lesser quantities, depending upon the amount of labour time invested and the techniques and crops used. Sowing rates vary, and returns on seed vary by season, by year, by type of soil and by levels of fertility. High seed : yield ratios are often accompanied by low returns per unit area. In addition, it has been observed that for a subsistence peasant farmer there is no normal seed : yield ratio – sowing rate, type of soil, amount of seed stored from previous years, numbers of available workers on the land and so forth all affect levels of production. We might also add that demands from landlords and/or governments similarly affected this picture, since levels of yield might be

forced upward – subject to the constraints of crop and climate – by economic and political pressures.²¹

A range of proposals for ancient cereal yields have been made. One suggestion for wheat gives a figure of 390 kg per hectare (156 kg per acre),²² which represents a seed-sown : seed-yield ratio of 1:3, at a sowing rate of 130 kg per hectare (52 kg per acre); and for barley of 670 kg per hectare (268 kg per acre), in a seed-sown: seed-yield ratio of 1:5, with the same sowing rate of 130 kg per hectare.²³ Different values have been proposed for wheat – for example, 600-900 kg per hectare (or 240-360 per acre), with a seed-sown : seed-yield ratio of 1:5-7, at a sowing rate of 130 kg/ha; and for barley 1,020-1,270 kg/ha (or 408-508 per acre), with a seed-sown : seed-yield ratio of *ca* 1:7-9, at the same sowing rate.²⁴ These figures are based on an inscription from Eleusis dated to 329/328 BCE, recording the receipt by officials of the sanctuary of the first fruits in wheat and barley for the 10 tribes of Attica, and a series of deductions about cultivated area, fallow regime and so forth. They can, therefore, be challenged on a number of grounds, and have been so. More recent estimates based on the same inscription combined with archaeological and survey information have produced the following figures:²⁵

Wheat: 625 kg/ha (or 250 kg per acre); seed-sown : seed-yield ratio of 1:4.8; sowing rate of 130 kg/ha (or 52 kg per acre)

Barley: 770 kg/ha (or 308 kg per acre); seed-sown : seed-yield ratio of 1:6; sowing rate of 130 kg/ha.

From the mediaeval period we have some slightly different calculations, varying additionally according to the terrain, but producing an average yield for wheat on the plain of some 1:3.3 and 1:2.8 for higher river terrace arable.²⁶ For the sake of the generalisations I want to make now, therefore, let us take a reasonable mean between these figures of some 1:4 for wheat, with a per hectare production of

²¹ There is a large literature on this topic. See A. Jarde, *Les céréales dans l'antiquité grecque* (Paris 1925/1979); P. Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity. Essays in social and economic history* (Cambridge 1998); P. Halstead, *Traditional and Ancient Rural Economy in Mediterranean Europe* (London 1987); S. Isager and J.E. Skydsgaard, *Ancient Greek Agriculture: An introduction* (London 1992). On seed : yield ratios see M.S. Spurr, *Arable cultivation in Roman Italy (c. 200 B.C.-100 A.D.)* (London 1986); P. Garnsey, "Yield of the land", in B. Wells (ed.), *Agriculture in Ancient Greece* (Stockholm 1992), 147-155.

²² 1 hectare = 10,000m². There are 2.471 acres per hectare. Given the relative imprecision of these values, however, I have rounded this up to 2.5 acres per hectare for ease of reference.

²³ A. Barbagallo, "La produzione media relativa dei cereali e delle vite nella Grecia, nella Sicilia e nell'Italia antica", *Rivista di Storia Antica* 8 (1904), 477-504.

²⁴ A. Jarde, *Les céréales*, 33-60.

²⁵ Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity*.

²⁶ M.S. Spurr, *Arable Cultivation in Roman Italy, c. 200 B.C. – A.D. 100* (London 1986).

approx. 520 kg (i.e. 208 kg per acre) and a sowing rate of 130 kg/ha (52 kg per acre), and let us retain the estimate of 770 kg/ha (i.e. 308 kg per acre) for the barley, so that we can begin to make some calculations about the amount of land required to produce supplies for the forces used in our examples. While recent research in this field would suggest that these are comparatively low yields, they are borne out by the very limited evidence currently available (from texts) for the late Roman and Byzantine periods. Here, documents relating to crop yields for both the Balkans and Asia Minor suggest returns on sowing of some 1:3.5-5 in ground of medium quality and in dry agriculture conditions, with higher rates in wet or irrigated areas – as much as 1:8-9.²⁷ But since the variations for Italy in the later mediaeval and early modern periods ranges from yields of 1:3-4 to 1:8-10, and in pre-1940s Turkey from 1:5-9, depending on zone (wet or dry), we may take them as averages across a wider terrain with an assumed range of variable sub-areas, so that they will serve our purpose, if only as illustrations of the issue in hand.²⁸

On the basis of the calculations made above, a force of 1,000 troopers with 1,250 horses would have a daily grain requirement of approximately 4,050 kg, of which 1,250 kg is wheat and 2,750 kg is barley for the horses (assuming also a somewhat artificial conversion rate of flour to bread of 1:1). The figures above suggest that the produce of some 2.4 ha (6 acres) for the wheat and 3.5 ha (8.75 acres) for the barley would be required per day. We can then multiply by appropriate factors to determine how much land would feed larger or smaller forces. For example, the force of 4,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry referred to, in order to provide the 13,000 kg per day of wheat for the soldiers and 11,000 kg per day for the horses would require a total of 25 hectares' (62.5 acres') worth of wheat and 14.2 hectares' (35.5 acres') worth of barley. Add to that the 200 acres of medium grazing or its equivalent and 150,000 litres of water for the horses, and roughly a further 20,000 litres for the soldiers, and we begin to get some idea of the demands on the areas through which a relatively modest force might pass. On this basis, a 10,000-strong army would need the produce of some 692 ha (or 1,730 acres) of land to stay in the field for up to 15 days; an army of 20,000 would require 1,384 hectares (or 3,460 acres); and so on. I stress once again that such figures are averages based on one part of the central Mediterranean – a great deal more work is needed on crop types, productivity, agricultural techniques and work, and related matters, for several other regions of the empire, if any meaningful results are to be achieved. If we can calculate, using field survey and related techniques, how much land was cultivated, for what crops, and what the levels of productivity and the rates of return on

²⁷ E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles* (Paris 1977), 246-248; M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle. Propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris 1992), 80-82.

²⁸ M. Aymard, "Rendements et productivité agricole dans l'Italie moderne", *Annales ESC* 28 (1973), 456-492; G. Hillman, "Agricultural productivity and past population potential at Aşvan. An exercise in calculation of carrying capacity", *Anatolian Studies* 23 (1973), 225-244.

sowing were for a given period and area, we will be able to control much more effectively than is presently possible the figures given in many mediaeval sources. But this sort of work is still in its infancy.

Finally, how was this material carried? The account of the 911 expedition makes it clear that the state was able to organise a fairly effective collection of substantial amounts of grain from across the western provinces of Asia Minor, and we know from late Roman and Byzantine texts more or less exactly how military supplies were calculated in relation to the annual tax burden of the producing population, and that such supplies were then transported by the producers to state granaries, or consumed directly by local troops in the locality. But long-distance transport clearly posed some difficulties. Before we can begin to tackle this, of course, we need another set of statistics: what could different types of animal carry, and for how long?

The approximate maximum weight a horse or mule can transport over reasonably long distances is about 250 lbs (114 kg),²⁹ and a little more over short stretches, although the optimum has generally been set at about 200 lbs in modern and immediately pre-modern pack-trains.³⁰ In the late third-century Edict of Diocletian (14.11) a load of 200 Roman lbs (65.49 kg/144 lbs) is prescribed; a sixth-century source gives mules a total burden of 156-166 Roman lbs (50-53 kg/110-116 lbs).³¹ Similar limits are established by the imperial legislation on the public post, and we may reasonably assume, on the basis of the skeletal evidence from archaeological sites, that these loads reflect the capacity of relatively small animals and ponies.³² It seems also clear from comparative evidence – for example, from the Ottoman period – that governments tried on the whole to protect the pack-animals from damage through overloading – this explains why in both the *Codex Theodosianus* and several other sources the maxima are in fact lower than the animals in question could actually carry.³³

A mid-tenth-century Byzantine text gives somewhat higher levels. Three categories of load are specified: (a) saddle-horses carrying a man (presumably not armoured and carrying military panoply) and their own barley were loaded with

²⁹ See W.C. Schneider, "Animal laborans. Das Arbeitstier und sein Einsatz im Transport und Verkehr der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters", in *L'Uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo 31, Spoleto 1983 (Spoleto 1985: 457-578), at 493-554.

³⁰ W.B. Tegetmeir, *Horses, Asses, Mules and Mule Breeding* (Washington DC 1897), 129.

³¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* (MGH [AA]) 12.1-385) 4.47.5; 5.5.3, which seems especially light, although compares well with the 6 *modioi* mentioned in the ninth-century *Vita Philareti* (M.-H. Fourmy, M. Leroy, "La vie de S. Philarète", *Byzantion* 9 [1934], 85-170), 131.2-3 – although the text does not in fact suggest that this is a maximum.

³² CTh 8.5.8; 17; 28; 30 etc. For further comparative discussion, see B.S. Bachrach, "Animals and Warfare in Early Medieval Europe", in *L'Uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'alto Medioevo* (Spoleto 1985: 707-751), 716-720.

³³ For the Ottoman evidence, see Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 76-77.

four *modioi* each – 106 Roman lbs = 75 lbs (34 kg); (b) unriden saddle-horses carried eight *modioi* – 212 Roman lbs = 150 lbs (68 kg); and (c) pack-animals loaded with barley carried ten *modioi* – 265 Roman lbs = 187 lbs (85 kg).³⁴ Thus the maximum permitted load for an animal in the imperial baggage-train in the ninth and tenth centuries was set at 10 *modioi* without the pack-saddle (*sagma*) and harness which, according to the legislation of the fourth to sixth centuries, weighed approx. 50-60 Roman lbs (35-42 lbs/16-19 kg, equivalent to 51-62 Byzantine lbs).³⁵

No single figure for ‘average’ loads has been produced, however, for several reasons. First, because of the uncertainty surrounding the exact meaning of, and the relationship between, the weights and measures used by ancient and mediaeval writers; second, because the size of the animals plays an important role. The carrying capacity of a mule or horse is in direct relationship to the weight and stature of the animal. Lastly, local variations in climate, ground and so on also played an important role, and these factors are hardly ever mentioned in connection with the use of animals in warfare.³⁶ I have used here the tenth-century Byzantine figures as a starting point, modified as appropriate by modern or more recent historical information on the capacities and needs of these animals in military contexts.

We also need to know the weights of the soldiers carried by horses or mules, since this would also affect any calculations we might make about the numbers of animals in a given force, the amount of provisions it needed to carry with it or to forage for, and so forth. Based on some Roman evidence and combined with some later mediaeval evidence, as well as with archaeological material on the weights of items of armour and weaponry, I will take the average weight for a horseman to be roughly 154 lbs (70 kg), the weight of his accoutrements as a further 6 kg for clothing, 14 kg for a mail shirt, 1.4 kg for a helmet, 5.5 kg for a light shield, 2 kg for a spear, 1 kg for a light sword or sabre, and 12 kg for a military saddle and harness – generalisations, but based on measured weights of items of Roman military equipment.³⁷ The total thus amounts to some 112 kg (approx. 246 lbs). A horseman thus equipped would not be able to carry much extra weight without damaging his mount – a maximum of 3-4 kg (between 6 and 9 lbs), sufficient for three to four days’ supplies for himself, or about one day’s worth for both himself and his mount: note that both the late sixth-century *Strategikon* and the tenth-

³⁴ See J.F. Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*. Introduction, text, translation, commentary (CFHB vol. 28., Vienna 1990/repr. 1996), (C) 549-553. For the middle and later Byzantine *modios* (there were at least four different measures thus named) see Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie*, 95-96, 97-108.

³⁵ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises*, (C) 411-414, 549-553. For pack-saddle and harness: CTh 8.5.47 and CJ 12.50.12.

³⁶ See Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 126-130; Hyland, *Equus*, 153-156, 255-257.

³⁷ See Hyland, *Equus*, 154 and Table 5, with sources.

century treatise on *Skirmishing* recommend that cavalry soldiers carry three to four days' supply with them in their saddle bags.³⁸ Combining these different sets of figures we can produce a table illustrating the requirements for different sizes of army in food, water, pack-animals and so forth, and establish how far a given force could travel under different conditions before needing re-supply.

A single example will suffice to make the point. Let us take an army of 10,000, made up of 6,000 infantry and 4000 cavalry accompanied by 1,000 remounts. Such a force requires some 24,000 kg of grain per day for the animals and to be baked into bread for the men. If we assume that the infantry carry only their weapons and equipment and that the cavalry carry no additional supplies themselves, the following results are obtained:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Days</i>	<i>total of provisions</i>	<i>load minus ration per animal</i>	<i>number of mules required</i>	<i>no. of mules p.d. extra to needs after rations considered</i>
1	24,000 x 1 = 24,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 1	= 256 (R 255)	6 (5)
2	24,000 x 2 = 48,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 2	= 524 (R 521)	12 (11)
5	24,000 x 5 = 120,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 5	= 1,412 (R 1,395)	32 (32)
10	24,000 x 10 = 240,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 10	= 3,244 (R 3,158)	74 (72)
15	24,000 x 15 = 360,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 15	= 5,715 (R 5,455)	130 (125)
20	24,000 x 20 = 480,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 20	= 9,231 (R 8,572)	210 (197)
24	24,000 x 24 = 576,000	÷ 96 - 2.2 x 24	= 13,334 (R 12,000)	300 (275)

In fact, if the cavalry remounts are employed to carry extra provisions, the first stages of any march can be covered by the horsemen themselves, up to 4 days; while the infantry can in turn carry up to twenty days' worth of supplies if necessary – there is plenty of Roman and later evidence to support this assertion. If we therefore subtract the infantry portion (6,000 x 1.3 kg per day = 7,800 kg) from

³⁸ Cf. Maurice, *Strat.* 1.2.4; *Skirmishing*, §16.

the above calculations, and then add in mules carrying items of siege equipment, tents and other paraphernalia, as well as a quota of camp attendants and followers (both servants and specialist armourers and weapons makers) an expedition of up to twenty days away from supply depots or foraging opportunities is logistically quite feasible, provided that 8,500-9,500 mules or pack-animals were available. How many attendants there were needed for the pack-animals is unclear – one tenth-century source suggests one man per ten mules or twenty pack-horses. During imperial expeditions in the later ninth and tenth centuries, the mules of the imperial baggage were each accompanied by an individual muleteer drawn from the special corps of the *Optimatoi*, although these were clearly exceptional circumstances.³⁹

Armies substantially larger than this would rapidly lose in flexibility and speed. In the fifth century, soldiers were trained to carry up to 17-20 days' worth of rations, according to regulations preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus*. Whether this amount was regularly carried by the troops, except when making rapid marches in hostile territory, is unclear. In Roman territory the greater part was probably transported by accompanying pack-animals, as noted in the late sixth-century *Strategikon*, which also recommended that cavalry soldiers carry 3-4 days' supply with them in their saddle bags. The same treatise asserts that troops camped between six and ten days' march from the enemy should take 20-30 lbs of hard tack each when they march to battle. Procopius corroborates the information in the *Codex Theodosianus* for the sixth century. It probably remained standard thereafter – a late tenth-century treatise notes that the maximum supply of barley for the horses that an army could take with it was for twenty-four days.⁴⁰

The nature of the landscape and the season are crucial elements in any consideration of the amount of provisioning armies needed, and thus how many extra pack-animals they required. Within imperial territory Byzantine armies took minimal amounts of supplies with them, since there was a system of regular provisioning operated by the local administration. Where this was not forthcoming, grain at least will have been carried with the army. Outside imperial territory, foraging for hard fodder, food for the soldiers and pasture for the animals will have been a major challenge to any commanding officer, if only because rapid movement cannot occur if the army is foraging for all its supplies. Muslim sources

³⁹ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three treatises*, (C) 332-345.

⁴⁰ *Campaign Organisation and Tactics*, ed. and trans. G.T. Dennis, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, 241-335 (text 246-326) §21.21-23 (302 f.). For Roman rates, see C. Lang (ed.), *Vegetius, Epitome rei militaris* (Leipzig 1885), 1.19 (Eng. trans.: *Vegetius, Epitome of military science*, trans. N.P. Milner [Liverpool 1993]); Ammianus Marcellinus, *Works*, J.C. Rolfe (ed. & trans.), 3 vols. (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1935-1937), 16.2.8; 17.9.2; and H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350-425* (Oxford 1996), 115-116; Watson, *The Roman Soldier*, 62-66, for figures and evidence. Cf. also Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, 91-93. For the sixth century: Procopius, *Wars* 3.13.15; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.2.4; 1.9.2; 5.4.

note that on a winter raid (in February/March) into Byzantine territory, the raiders should not spend more than twenty days there and back, since that is the maximum time for which they can carry supplies with them (and the pack-animals whose loads had been consumed could then be used to carry the booty). This was in strong contrast to the spring raid, which lasted about thirty days, and the summer raid, lasting up to sixty days. In both cases, fodder and grain for the animals and provisions for the soldiers and camp attendants will have been extracted from the areas through which the army marched. Indeed, the availability of supplies and fodder for the army was a key element in planning the objective of any campaign, and pasturing for the horses was particularly important – as the Arab source just mentioned indicates, and as later Ottoman evidence also makes abundantly clear.⁴¹ All this fits with what the Byzantine evidence tells us.

Contexts in which troops would need to provide all the hard fodder for their horses and all the rations for the men from supplies accompanying the expedition will usually have involved leaving imperial territory, and will also generally have been for limited periods until the army reached better supplies which could be foraged. Even inside the empire, however, there exists a relationship between troops and pack-animals which determined the possibilities for long-distance movement. If a given body of soldiers were provided with all its food, forage and hard feed for the animals along the route, for example (conditions which might be met regularly within the empire, in the case of planned expeditions, or on enemy territory when the Roman commander had the advantage of surprise and the appropriate season), the logistical options are very good – a raiding party of 1,000 horsemen with 250 remounts could stay in the field for a minimum of ten days and carry all their needs with them without extra pack-animals. By the same token, a force of 4,000 cavalry with 1,000 remounts carrying rations for the men only would be able to transport some 96,000 kg of provisions, enough for the men for about fourteen days; a similar cavalry force, accompanied by 6,000 infantry, and with the infantry carrying their own provisions, would have needed fewer extra pack-animals to stay in the field for up to three weeks.

Supplying armies with their food was, therefore, a complex operation, the implications of which are rarely appreciated or made explicit in the literature on mediaeval warfare. Logistical organisation was an absolutely fundamental aspect of warfare, and the sophisticated arrangements of the late Roman and Byzantine empire in the period up to the tenth and eleventh centuries undoubtedly contributed to its successes in both offensive and defensive operations. But the implications of

⁴¹ Leo, *Tact.* 13.16; 16.36; *Campaign organisation*, §21. 22-23 (trans. Dennis, p. 302f.); Abū'l-Faraj al-Kâtib al-Bagdâdî Kudâma ibn Ja'far, *Kitâb al-Harâj*, in M.-J. De Goeje (ed.), *Bibliotheca Geographorum Araborum* (Leyden 1870ff.); nunc continuata consultantibus R. Blachère (etc.) (Leyden 1938ff.) VI, 196-199, at 199. For the Ottoman evidence: Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 20.

studying military logistics and food supplies go well beyond the purely military, and lead us directly to the study of agrarian productivity and technology, settlement patterns and population densities, and the effects of climatic change, land use and the over-exploitation of resources on economic, social and political history.

John Fitzpatrick

(Not sailing) to Byzantium: Metropolis, hinterland and frontier in the transformation of the Roman empire

And therefore have I sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium
Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*

And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
Eliot, *Little Gidding*

Nobody sails the seas just to get across them
Polybius, cited in *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 342.

Introduction

Constantinople/Istanbul was arguably the longest lived great imperial metropolis in the pre-industrial world. Counting only its 'East Roman'/Byzantine phase, it far outranks Rome: with its Ottoman phase counted in, it outranks Beijing and Delhi as well. It also seems a quintessentially Mediterranean, maritime metropolis, unlike Rome, whose early imperial growth had been built on the assets of an inland 'river town'.¹ As late antique Rome dwindled into insignificance and the Islamic conquests, in Peter Brown's words, "turned...inside out" the political geography of the eastern and southern Mediterranean² – with major imperial centres retreating from the fringe of the sea towards the fringe of the desert – Constantinople survived as the only great bureaucratic-imperial metropolis directly on the Mediterranean littoral. It sustained this distinctive status for another thousand years.

¹ The description 'river town' comes from R. Holloway, *The Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium* (London 1994), 165.

² P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London 1971), 197.

It is tempting to attribute the longevity of the empire to the exceptional potential of this maritime metropolitan site. As Philip Mansel puts it, in his history of Ottoman ‘Constantinople’:

Constantinople was a natural object of desire, for it appeared to have been designed by geography and history to be the capital of a great empire. Situated at the end of a triangular peninsula, it was surrounded by water on three sides...The city was both a natural fortress and a matchless deep-water port, enjoying easy access by sea to Africa, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In addition, it was situated on the crossroads of the mainland routes between Europe and Asia, the Danube and the Euphrates. Its site seemed to have been expressly created to receive the wealth of the four corners of the earth.³

On the other hand, Byzantium/Byzantium had existed as a second rank Greek city for almost a thousand years before it was raised to the purple by Constantine in 330 CE. For most of the classical Greek and Hellenistic era, its position at ‘the crossroads of Europe and Asia’ seems to have been as much a problem as an advantage, leaving it in an exposed marchland location between the constantly fluctuating orbits of larger imperial powers. Even after it had been brought well within the Roman imperial orbit, it could still be subject to marchland dilemmas when the empire as a whole descended into civil war. As late as 195 CE, it was sacked and ‘reduced to village status’ by Septimius Severus for backing the wrong side in the civil war which brought him to power.⁴

As Constantinople, moreover, it did not spring fully armed into life as the sole alternative imperial metropolis to a previously unchallenged Rome – as a focus on eye-catching developments like Constantine’s creation of an alternative senate and the diversion to Constantinople of Egyptian grain supplies might suggest. Rome had already surrendered much of its functional role as imperial metropolis well before this point. The Roman state, along with the Roman emperor, had been ‘on the road’ since the onset of the great third century crisis, and arguably since the northern wars of Marcus Aurelius. Constantinople emerged late in an extended sequence of ‘tetrarchic capitals’ in northern Europe:⁵ and if there was a single ‘metropolitan region’ over the century preceding its re-foundation it was arguably in the Balkans/middle Danube zone. Even as the military focus shifted towards the east with the replacement of the Parthian by the Sassanid empire in Iran and Mesopotamia, Constantinople was still in competition with other eastern imperial

³ P. Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the world’s desire, 1453-1924* (London 1995).

⁴ S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (Oxford 1998), 131.

⁵ F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31BC-AD 337)* (London 1977), 15-17, 28-57. Millar comments that “the emperor functioned as a sort of moving capital of the empire himself” well before the third century.

centres, above all Antioch. Its career as the unequivocal East Roman metropolis seems to have begun around 400, and this 'east Roman' empire was in turn plunged into major transformative crisis two centuries later.

This paper explores these paradoxes by approaching Byzantium explicitly as a 'successor state' of the Roman empire: *one successor state among many* in the 'post-Roman space' generated by the Roman imperial collapse;⁶ and a state whose distinctively 'Byzantine' trajectory is best dated from the seventh century, when its territories were reduced to around one-sixth of the area controlled by Rome at its height.⁷ While acknowledging important institutional and cultural continuities in the Rome-Byzantium transition, it argues that these can be properly understood only against the context of two massive geopolitical discontinuities in ancient history: first the 'rise' and then the 'fall' of the Roman empire. Above all, it emphasises the importance of an indirect transition from Rome to Byzantium via an extra-Mediterranean 'frontier-metropolis' zone in transalpine Europe. To elaborate on the paper's title: not sailing but 'overland' – or down the Danube frontier – to Byzantium. In other words: no extension of Roman power into continental Europe in the late classical period, no Byzantine empire in the eastern Mediterranean in the late antique and mediaeval periods.

Part 1: The geopolitical problematic

The paper is organised around a contrast between two 'problematics' – where problematic means simply a "rudimentary organization of a field of phenomena which yields problems [or questions] for investigation".⁸ Crucially this includes both questions explicitly addressed, brought to the foreground, highlighted as interesting or important and questions implicitly suppressed, pushed to the background, marginalised as uninteresting or unimportant.

On the side of negative critique (a task largely deferred to part 3 of the paper) I try to delineate a problematic occupying an influential, though far from exclusive, place in the 'Late Antiquity' literature. It may loosely be described as *organicist, institutionalist and geocultural*, and it offers a sophisticated restatement of the traditional story about cultural and institutional continuity between the old and the 'new Rome' of Byzantium. In effect, it identifies not just one but two instances of this 'new Rome' pattern – the second emerging in those former Roman territories which fell under Islamic control in the seventh century – and a 'new Persia' pattern to boot, most fully realised in the transition from the Umayyad to the Abbasid

⁶ By analogy with the widespread use of the term 'post-Soviet space' in discussing the contemporary situation of the 'Soviet successor states'.

⁷ See the graph of territorial changes in W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford 1997), 8.

⁸ P. Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Somerset 1982), xv.

Caliphate in the eighth century. On the side of positive advocacy (which occupies most of parts 1 and 2) I sketch an alternative problematic, which may loosely be described as *structuralist, materialist and geopolitical*. (From now on, I will generally use ‘geopolitical’ as a shorthand label for this problematic and ‘geocultural’ for its counterpart.)

I also argue that this distinction between problematics is reflected in a surprisingly sharp distinction in judgements about what constitutes the ‘main trajectory’ of political, economic and cultural development across ancient western Eurasia (i.e. excluding east Asia and the Indian sub-continent, but including the north Africa and continental European surrounds of the Mediterranean basin). I associate the geocultural problematic with a bias towards a ‘southern trajectory’, starting with Achaemenid Persia and culminating in Islam. The geopolitical alternative, I suggest, highlights a ‘northern trajectory’, starting as far back as the Assyrian empire and continuing through to the Ottoman, with its crucial central sector dominated by a great loop from Rome to Byzantium through northern Europe.

Imperial logistics and economic integration

Despite the shorthand label, my geopolitical problematic involves an attempt to link two distinctive analytical approaches which are not always in dialogue with each other. The first, and most explicitly geopolitical, is exemplified in Michael Mann’s long term historical sociology of ‘the sources of social power’. In Mann’s words, this involves “a level of analysis” which is “concrete, *socio-spatial* and *organizational*”, concentrating on problems of “*organization, control, logistics and communication*”.⁹ The second, and most explicitly materialist, is exemplified in Fernand Braudel’s famous exploration of the invariant structures of ‘everyday’ or ‘material life’ in the *longue durée* of the Mediterranean basin and its surrounds.¹⁰

I further argue that the key to an effective dialogue between ‘geopolitical’ and ‘material life’ approaches is a systematic acknowledgement of the central role of ‘food economies’ throughout late and classical antiquity. “As in virtually all pre-industrial world economies, about 80-90 percent of people worked on the land”, even in the Roman empire at its height.¹¹ The production, processing and distribution of food was not just an important part of the wider economy. It virtually *was* the wider economy, and this has profound implications for thinking about the relationship between armies, states and economies in such contexts.

⁹ M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume 1: A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge 1986), 1-3, emphasis in original.

¹⁰ F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (Eng. trans. S. Philips, repr. 1981, 1st English language edn 1975). See also P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford 2000).

¹¹ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 264. See also K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological studies in Roman history*, vol.1 (Cambridge 1978), 6-7.

Until the last couple of decades, the centrality of food to the ‘high politics’ of imperial state-making has indeed been a suppressed or marginalised theme in literatures which appear to have a central concern with geopolitics. Conventional military history was mostly quite narrowly focussed, while the broader sweep of conventional diplomatic history and ‘international relations’ literature typically led up and away from the mundane details of material life into the kind of idealist history of great men, great cultures and great events against which Braudel polemicalised so memorably. Today, however, the relationship between food, logistics and state-making is a core theme for an impressive and growing body of generalist and specialist literature on pre-industrial states and economies, much of it looking back in some way to Owen Lattimore’s pioneering but long-neglected work, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*.¹²

It is now increasingly recognised that claims about the vast territorial reach of pre-industrial empires are virtually meaningless unless accompanied by persuasive arguments that food – and other essential ‘bulk goods’ – could be mobilised and moved around the empire in ways which supported, rather than undermined, the authority of the central government. Moreover, behind this obvious role in cutting down to size the territorial reputations of ancient states, this literature also challenges the belief that extended ‘world economies’ could be established simply on the basis of long distance trade in ‘preciosities’ for scattered clusters of elites, without a major input from effective large states with both the interest and the capacity to underpin substantial circulation of bulk goods. The characteristic political and economic geography of the pre-industrial world is often evoked by the image of an ‘archipelago’ of widely scattered heartlands or urbanised core regions, with only quite limited political and economic linkages across the intervening spaces in normal times.

Three ancillary implications of this literature are particularly important for this paper. First, water transport – above all by sea – enjoyed fundamental logistical advantages over land transport throughout the pre-industrial era. (It is an ironic reflection of this point that the ‘archipelago’ metaphor, in the sense used here, is most employed precisely in discussions of land transport logistics.) Second, from the viewpoint of imperial states, the transport and communication advantages of sea connections were offset by the difficulties they typically caused for centralised military control – what one recent international relations work describes as “the stopping power of water”.¹³ Third, therefore, special opportunities for relatively centralised states were associated with major ‘inland sea’ configurations which

¹² O. Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York 1940). On Byzantium, see J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 562-1204* (London 1999); on republican Rome, P. Erdkamp, *Hunger and the Sword: Warfare and food supply in the Roman Republican wars* (Amsterdam 1998).

¹³ J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York 2001), 236.

facilitated the close integration of water and land transport – not just literal inland seas but also major controllable river systems and major canals.

These considerations highlight the exceptional advantage which the Roman empire derived from encompassing virtually all the Mediterranean basin and many adjacent river systems – advantages that seem obvious to comparativists but sometimes less so to Mediterranean specialists. The only pre-industrial empire to rival or eclipse Rome in world-historical impact – namely China – was also the only one with a comparable package of inland sea logistical advantages; and it is no accident that logistics-minded analyses of the Chinese achievement tend to invoke the image of a constructed Mediterranean to highlight the role of the north-south ‘Grand Canal’ system in tying this package together.¹⁴

Military power and ‘material life’

Braudel’s treatment of the *longue durée* raises problems which are virtually the reverse of those attributed above to the conventional diplomatic history and international relations literature. Food occupies a central place in his account of the analytically primary realm of material life: but geopolitics is effectively relegated to the secondary (indeed tertiary) realm of the history of ‘events’. Braudel seems to allow no place for even the *occasional* transformative power of geopolitics: for instance, in building his case for viewing the Mediterranean as “not so much a single entity as a ‘complex of seas’”, he implicitly marginalises the Roman empire with the one-line judgement that “all human links” between the eastern and western Mediterranean “remained an adventure or at least a gamble”.¹⁵

However, without some analytical space for geopolitics, the attempt to account for long term ‘civilisational progress’ – above the repetitive level of the *longue durée* – tends to focus on *routes et villes*: that subset of *major* cities and *major* trade routes so embedded in the circuits of ‘high commerce’ that they can transcend the rise and fall of individual imperial states. In turn, this leads to a kind of back door endorsement of the special significance of certain ‘great cultures’ like Islam, which seem to have a special role in articulating major networks of *routes et villes* over extended periods.¹⁶

The key to this paradox is that by excising geopolitics from the realm of production and material life, one also excises the production dimension of one of the most decisive ‘commodities’ in the pre-industrial world: military power. If food

¹⁴ For a comparison literally in these terms, see M. Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford 1973), 54-55. The same point, in somewhat different words, is made in J.R. McNeill, “China’s environmental history in comparative perspective”, in M. Elvin and L. Ts’ui-jung, *Sediments of Time: Environment and society in Chinese history* (Cambridge 1998), 31.

¹⁵ *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world*, 135.

¹⁶ See the critique of this tendency in Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world*, and Mediterranean history more generally, in Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, chapters IV and V.

production is fundamentally implicated in almost all economic life, then one clue to the source of exceptional military power must lie in its integral relationship to particular systems of food production. Thus, different types of military power (cavalry, infantry, ‘light’, ‘heavy’, etc) may usefully be thought of as different types of ‘crops’, which ‘grow best’ in one or another type of ‘soil’, which can to a greater or lesser extent be ‘selectively bred’, processed like olive oil or wine, commodified and exported to distant ‘markets’. Since the export of military power is so fundamental to the empire-building process, it also makes sense to ask whether the ‘commodity’ requires a separate and costly transport infrastructure – as do wine and olive oil – or whether it can be induced or coerced into ‘walking to market’ – like sheep, goats, horses or camels.

This is brutal and disturbing analogy, which has not to my knowledge been explored in quite these terms before. However, its basic logic seems to have been transparent to ancient soldiers themselves: Roman infantry in the first century BCE described themselves as ‘Marius’ mules’, because they were required to transport not just themselves and their weapons but also much of the supplies and logistical equipment which would earlier have been carried by a baggage train.¹⁷ It also seems implicit in another ‘brutal analogy’, which is widely accepted by precisely those authors who are most attuned to the importance of the food-logistics relationship: the ‘protection racket model’ of pre-industrial state-making and economy-building.¹⁸

Perhaps the most suggestive use of the protection racket analogy occurs in Ernest Gellner’s reworking of the Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun’s famous account of state-making in mediaeval north Africa, where conquest dynasties typically rose and fell over the space of a few generations within the over-arching framework of an ongoing Islamic civilisation. “The pattern as such is not necessarily Islamic”, Gellner observes: such “circular or reversible [state-making]...was found in the arid zone before Islam”. It seems “*inherent in a certain general ecology, or mode of production and reproduction...in which extensive nomadic and/or mountain pastoralism coexists with trade and urban centres of artisan production*”.¹⁹

Tribes have solidarity, military cohesion and high military participation ratios. Urban dwellers have wealth, literacy and low military participation ratios. They are militarily vulnerable but ‘economically indispensable’ and “scripturalism confirms and reinforces their standing. The consequence is the kind of rotation of leadership, and a kind of symbiosis between rude tribal cohesion and urban sophistication, which Ibn Khaldun described”. Over the long term, political and cultural continuity

¹⁷ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 258.

¹⁸ A classic exposition of this model is C. Tilly, “War making and state making as organised crime”, in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge 1985), 169-191.

¹⁹ E. Gellner *Muslim Society* (Cambridge 1981), 31-32, emphasis added.

remains in the urban cores, the long term repository of civilisation. But at recurrent moments of upheaval, the renewal of effective government can only come from the tribal periphery.

Government is the gift of the tribe to the city. In a sense, the state *is* a tribe, which has moved from the desert to the citadel, and milks the town instead of its herds, and protects the mosque; the market-citadel-mosque trio constitutes the political system.²⁰

No agrarian society could match the military participation ratios of the kind of nomadic pastoralism described by Gellner, in which virtually every adult male was potentially a fighter. However, core features of Mediterranean agriculture – the long dry summers, the intimate relationship between narrow coastal plains/foothills and inland mountain and plateau regions, the intense competition for good land both among coast dwellers themselves and between them and interior groups – all combined to push ancient Mediterranean social orders towards the high end of the military participation spectrum. Certainly, military participation was far higher than among the irrigation agriculture peasantries of the oasis world, who were both geographically ‘caged’ and virtually demilitarised by the nature of their food production system, and the common prey of nomadic pastoralists and Mediterranean infantry throughout the period under consideration.

Thus “warfare...was embedded in the fabric of Roman society” in the fourth and third centuries BCE, with near annual campaigns a “dominant feature of Roman life”.²¹

The natural assumption of Roman citizens in any winter...would be a war the following summer...the structures of the state were geared for such fighting...[and] the Romans will have looked for war when none was at hand: for peasants do not need to work all summer, and there was time enough for fighting.²²

This pattern began to change from the late third century, as the wars with Carthage accelerated the pace of ‘overseas’ expansion. Wars became longer and were fought further away, with intervening periods of peace becoming longer as well, and the army was increasingly drawn from among the Italian rural proletariat.²³ Nonetheless, between 225 and 23 BCE, Keith Hopkins estimates, the “median size of the army” represented the conscription on average “of 13% of male citizens” for

²⁰ Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 25-26.

²¹ T. Cornell, “The end of Roman imperialism”, in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London 1993), 154-158.

²² S. Oakley, “The Roman conquest of Italy”, in Rich and Shipley, *War and Society in the Roman World*, 16.

²³ Cornell, “The end of Roman imperialism”, 156-157.

around seven years. In the culminating civil war era alone, the total number conscripted was around 500,000²⁴ (or somewhat greater than the estimated total emigration of Arabs from Arabia to the territories gained in the early Islamic conquests).²⁵

This last point highlights a more general one about numbers. While Mediterranean agriculture could not produce military participation levels quite so extraordinary as among militarised pastoral nomads, *absolute population levels* were much higher in rainfall agriculture regions than in steppe or desert ones. Combined with the impressive capacity of Mediterranean heavy infantry against light cavalry in reasonably confined battlefield situations, this made such infantry potentially an unequalled instrument for imperial expansion around the Mediterranean basin right through to the early stages of late antiquity. This potential, admittedly, might be restricted by the class interests of the middle farmer class, who could assert their ‘hoplite’ dominance of the battlefield – and marginalise the military potential of both mounted aristocrats and poorer, lightly armed farmers – only by keeping wars brief and local and resisting major expansionist military campaigns.²⁶ This was the case for a good deal of the history of the Greek polis world, with the result that when great imperial states did finally emerge from the Greek world, their situation was surprisingly similar to that of the militarised pastoral nomads described by Gellner – in that they were immediately drawn into the process of establishing conquest dynasties based directly on the major irrigation agriculture cores.

Rome, by contrast, had by the mid-Republican period developed a complex constitution which weakened the political power of the middle farmer class relative to those above and below them, together with an equally complex network of ‘citizen’ and ‘ally’ relationships with defeated populations elsewhere in peninsula Italy. Since many of these defeated populations would have had military participation ratios similar to the Romans themselves, Rome developed both enormous military resources and an inbuilt motor promoting further expansion. “The Roman system has been compared to a criminal operation which compensates its victims by enrolling them in the gang and inviting them to share in the proceeds of future robberies. This brutal analogy brings us back to the Roman state’s need to make war.”²⁷ When Rome finally took direct control of major irrigation agriculture regions, it had behind it around 300 years of imperial apprenticeship in Italy and the western Mediterranean, and was able to organise its conquests in an entirely

²⁴ Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 28-37.

²⁵ P. Crone, “The early Islamic world”, in K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein, *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (London 1999), 314.

²⁶ V. Hansen, *The Other Greeks: The family farm and the agrarian roots of western civilization* (New York 1995), chapters 6-8.

²⁷ T. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy And Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c.1000-264 BC)* (London 1995), 367.

new way – ruling from a distance in its own rainwater agriculture heartlands, not ‘migrating’ towards the irrigation cores as the Greek/Macedonian conquerors had done.

‘Material life’ and imperial logistics

A final distinctive feature of Roman expansion was the contribution of ‘army engineering’ to the long term articulation of conquered territories with each other and the imperial core. At the height of imperial expansion, most labour for major infrastructure works – roads, aqueducts, etc – was probably done by slaves – but the logistical functions of the army were crucial in putting the whole operation ‘on the road’. This brings us back to the burdens carried on campaign by ‘Marius’ mules’, which Mann accords a pivotal place in the power resources of the ‘Roman territorial empire’. Besides their battlefield weapons and three days rations, they carried a saw, basket, leather strap, pickaxe, axe, and sickle – all “tied around a long pole, carried like a lance, which Marius’s commissariat devised”. The weapons and rations were ‘unremarkable’, in comparison to previous armies. However, the other collection represented a major innovation in imperial state-making.

All...were ‘logistical weapons’, to extend the infrastructure of Roman rule...to build fortifications and communications routes...[and] add...to supplies... Contrast this to the equipment of most troops of other empires or city states – which had carried merely battlefield equipment. The Romans were the first to rule consistently through the army not only with terror, but also with civil-engineering projects. The troops were not reliant on enormous baggage trains, nor did they require local corvee labour to build their roads. The necessity to enter into elaborate negotiations with whomever controlled local food supplies was reduced.²⁸

“The legion armed with Marius’s pole” was the “final contribution of the Iron Age to the possibilities for *extensive* rule”, Mann argues. It put the earlier ‘infrastructural’ achievements of a millennium of Iron age development – coinage, literacy, the idea of the polis, etc – decisively on the road and far beyond both the arid zone/oasis world and the Mediterranean basin as well. It underpinned developments in transport infrastructure and economic interdependence – the ‘legionary economy’ – which were quite exceptional in the pre-industrial context; and provided essential infrastructural support for the empire-wide spread of Christianity as a universalist salvation religion.²⁹

²⁸ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 274-276.

²⁹ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 276, 524-525.

Mann himself ties this logistical breakthrough to a specific time – around 100 BCE – and a specific group of agents – “the brains of Marius’s commissariat”. But it seems better to locate it in the long term process of interaction between iron age agriculture and iron age warfare reaching back into the preceding centuries of Roman expansion. This crucial logistical potential of Mediterranean infantry, like its more narrowly military potential, was initially embedded in the Mediterranean food system – though it eventually allowed the legion to become a ‘disembedded’ conquest machine which could progressively assimilate soldiers drawn from far beyond its original Mediterranean homelands.

Part 2: The northern ‘imperial state’ trajectory

I have argued above that ‘inland sea’ transport relationships and infantry-dominant military systems both on balance favoured centralised territorial empires in the pre-industrial world, with ‘archipelagic’ transport relationships and cavalry-dominant military systems on balance having the reverse effect. This section attempts to combine these propositions in a crude matrix against which the contrasting west Eurasian development trajectories mentioned earlier may be mapped. The matrix obtained by combining the inland sea/archipelagic and infantry/cavalry spectrums is set out in Figure 1 below. This shows maximum potential for centralised states in the area of quadrant 1 and minimum potential in quadrant 4, with quadrants 2 and 3 falling, for different reasons, between these two extremes.

A mapping of a more literal kind will also be kept in view, concerning the relationship of the two trajectories to three major ecological zones in west Eurasia – all to some degree articulated by the Mediterranean basin and to some extent incorporated in the total geopolitical ‘space’ of the Roman empire. The core food-related features of these zones may be summarised, broadly following Braudel, as follows:

Arid zone/oasis world: irrigation agriculture; no significant rainfall; ‘signature’ food plant, date palm.

‘True Mediterranean’ zone: rainwater agriculture predominant; winter rainfall; signature food plant, olive tree.

Northern/continental Europe zone: rainwater agriculture; summer and winter rainfall; no single signature food plant. Viticulture and wine production progressively extended to much of region in Roman period, but olive oil an exotic import throughout. (Effectively includes Po basin, or Roman Cisalpine Gaul.)

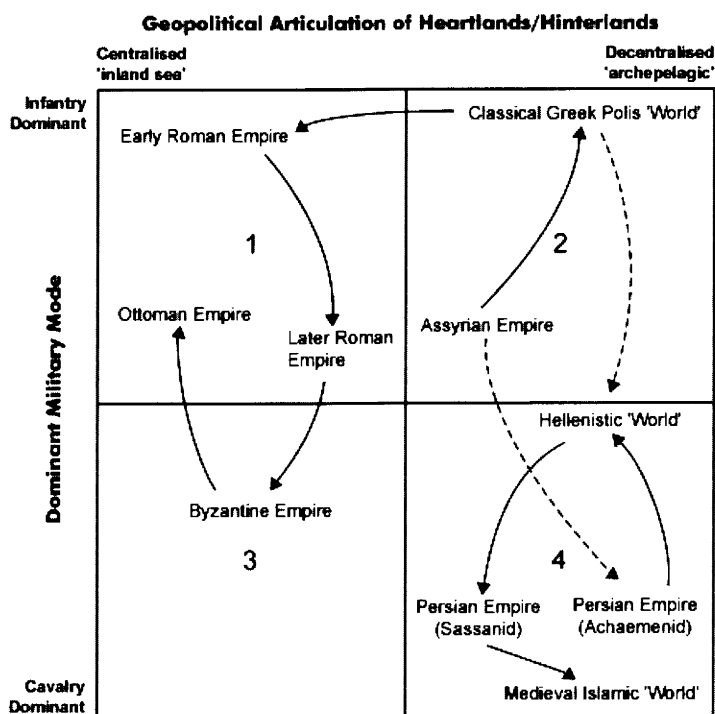


Fig. 1. Transport logistics and military modes

Detailed discussion of the southern trajectory as highlighted by the geocultural problematic will be left to the critique of that problematic in part 3. However, Figure 1 suggests a very specific political geography associated with the core geocultural theme of long-term civilisational continuities peaking in late antiquity – entirely located in the quadrant of minimum potential for centralised states. It directs attention away from the northwest Mediterranean and northern Europe, where no such civilisational continuities can be found and where the specific impact of Rome – both in its rise and its fall – was most distinctive and unequivocal. Instead it directs attention eastwards and southwards, towards the arid zone/oasis world. Here it is indeed possible to identify very long term continuities – from Achaemenid Iran to the Islamic Caliphates and beyond – so long as one is not particularly exercised by the distinction between active imperial control and loose ideological hegemony.

The northern trajectory is not nearly so tightly circumscribed in terms of location on this conceptual map, though in a concrete geographical sense it is strongly associated throughout with rainwater agricultural regions to the north of the oasis world. It begins with Assyria, the first great Iron Age empire and also first instance of control of a major irrigation-agriculture core from a 'marchland' metropolis in

the northern rainwater zone. The Assyrian heartland lay well outside the Mediterranean basin and somewhat outside the olive line: but otherwise it fell within the Mediterranean climate zone, broadly described. (It also lay very close to the eastern extremity of the Roman *limes* in West Asia as later established by Septimius Severus and was even briefly absorbed within the empire under Trajan.)³⁰

The Assyrian empire was founded on “control over extensive rain-watered cornlands and iron ore deposits”, Mann notes, and “the role of the peasant farmer and peasant soldier was quite similar to those in the Roman empire”.³¹ It similarly prefigured Roman patterns on the crucial statist criterion of bureaucratisation of military force.

Standard equipment, standard units, a ladder of promotion open to talent: these familiar bureaucratic principles of army management appear to have been either introduced or made standard by the Assyrian rulers. A parallel civil bureaucracy proved itself capable of assembling food stocks for a proposed campaign, of building roads to facilitate movement across long distances, and of mobilizing labor for the erection of fortifications.³²

From Assyria to the early Roman empire

From Assyria to Rome the northern trajectory leads through the eastern Mediterranean – and the more deeply embedded and egalitarian efflorescence of Mediterranean infantry among the classical Greeks – but with two important complications. First, the geopolitical inheritance from the Assyrian empire – including a presence in Egypt and on the east Mediterranean littoral, fell first to the cavalry-dominant power of Achaemenid Persia. Second, as noted earlier, no unified agrarian empire emerged from the highly fragmented or ‘archipelagic’ environment of classical Greece, and the eventual Greek/Macedonian conquests of Persia produced a multi-state ‘Hellenistic’ system whose main power centres still lay in the arid zone/oasis world.

However, the Greek-Macedonian conquests also demonstrated the exceptional empire-building potential of Mediterranean infantry: and the subsequent ‘rise of Rome’ combined unfettered exploitation of this military potential with the inland sea logistical advantages flowing from domination of the entire Mediterranean basin. The Roman empire involved a fundamental and long-lasting shift back to the relationship between rainwater and irrigation agriculture regions foreshadowed in the Assyrian case. The eastern Mediterranean and its hinterlands – including the greatest single ‘oasis’ region in the entire arid zone – were absorbed within an

³⁰ D. William, *The Reach of Rome* (New York 1997), 185-191.

³¹ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 322.

³² W. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, armed force and society since A.D. 1000* (Oxford 1983), 13-14.

unusually centralised imperial state for over five centuries; and a single political and economic order spanned *all three* ecological zones specified above for the first and only time in west Eurasian history.

Even before the incorporation of Egypt, Rome had progressively acquired a major complex of overseas agricultural hinterlands from the territories of defeated West Mediterranean rivals: in Sicily, Sardinia, north Africa and southern Spain. From at least 100 BCE till well into the late empire, the changing geopolitical relations between metropolis, hinterland and frontier seem a more illuminating guide to the development of the Roman state than the conventional cultural-institutional narrative about constitutional transition from ‘Republic’ through ‘Principate’ to ‘Dominate’. As Mann puts it:

The essential structure of Rome remained the same through these constitutional changes... During that period, Rome was an *empire*, with or without an emperor – ruling vast territories with a would-be centralized army and bureaucracy, embodying enormous inequalities of power, and having effectively deprived its ordinary citizens of power.³³

Three corollaries of this proposition seem crucial for this paper, all closely bound up with the logistical revolution represented by ‘the legion with Marius’ pole’. First, it makes little sense to look for a dominant civilian ‘line’ of development in the Roman state from the late Republic onwards. Rome had initially assembled its vast conquests with the political mechanisms of an overgrown Mediterranean city-state and the civilian bureaucracy remained ‘tiny’ even under the pseudo-republican Principate. “The state was largely an army. The state-led economy was an army-led economy.”³⁴

Second, insofar as the army is the main place to look for the development of a state ‘apparatus’, the *geographical terrain of that development* should be sought not inside, but outside, the city of Rome itself. In some respects an embryonic army-state was already on the road in the second century BCE, consolidating the territorial legacies of the war with Carthage from northern Italy across to Spain. This was still a very fragmented and incoherent apparatus, involving both geographically separate senatorial commands and complex constitutional arrangements with ‘Latin’ colonies and still-independent allies. With the huge increase of territory and booty in the first century, any over-arching state unity dissolved in massive civil wars, first between Rome and most of its allies and second between great consular warlords emerging from the Roman elite itself. However, the scale and organisation of the allied revolt – at least nominally in favour of a separate Italian state – is itself an ironic tribute to the state-making

³³ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 259.

³⁴ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 274.

potential of Roman imperial expansion; and it was precisely on an appeal to ‘*tota Italia*’ that Octavius/Augustus based his victorious campaign in the climactic stages of the civil wars.

Third, by the death of Augustus in 14 CE the Roman army-state was already well on the way to a second great geopolitical centre-shift – not just beyond the city of Rome but beyond the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean basin as well. The end of the civil wars was marked by a radical demilitarisation of the Mediterranean basin and a corresponding militarisation of a hugely extended northern frontier, with the majority of the legions not just stationed in but recruited from the north by the end of the first century. The main dynamic here seems to have been internal – the product of a complex of ‘push’ factors associated with the out-of-control protection racket that was the late Republic, rather than a rational military response to serious external threat. However, precisely because the northern frontiers were not under constant and unpredictable military pressure in the early empire, they could develop a relatively stable ‘frontier’ economy, society and even ‘polity’, underpinned by the transport revolution flowing from the massive military presence in the region. Since Rome had never really produced an imperial state apparatus separate from the army, one might say that when the army went to the northern frontiers the state went with the army.

Civil and military power could not be so easily detached from each other and maintained in discrete sectors. It was not so much that Roman emperors could be created outside Rome, but rather that both the political power and indeed the center of the state itself would gravitate inexorably to its heavily armed periphery. In a long-term geopolitical trend, the newly militarized imperial periphery provoked the concentration of capital cities, military supply factories, and even state mints in regions close to the frontier.³⁵

From the later Roman empire to Byzantium

As the relationship between this heading and the previous one suggests, the early to late empire transition involves greater continuities, from a geopolitical perspective, than either of the transitions before or after it. The late-Republic to early empire transition involved massive geopolitical expansion and the late-empire to Byzantium transition massive geopolitical contraction. By contrast, once the multiple invasions and civil wars of the third century crisis had finally been contained, the ‘early-late’ empire under Diocletian emerged with a set of frontiers remarkably similar to those of the ‘late-early’ empire fifty years earlier under Alexander Severus.

³⁵ B. Shaw, “War and violence”, in G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (eds), *Late Antiquity: A guide to the post-classical world* (Cambridge, Mass. 1999), 146.

Continuity also seems the dominant feature of the state ‘apparatus’ and its relationship to the administration of the imperial territories as a whole, despite the emphasis on radical change in this area in traditional accounts of the Principate to Dominate transition. Even with impressive relative growth from the miniscule base of the early empire, the “absolute number of bureaucrats was still tiny...somewhere around thirty-five thousand”.³⁶ This cannot fundamentally have changed the geopolitical logic of Roman imperial administration: rule directly through the army along the militarised frontiers and indirectly through urban elites in ‘civilianised’ provinces – and especially in the great city regions around the Mediterranean basin. Similarly, the increases in total army size were effectively more of the same as regards the development of the state apparatus, merely accentuating the basic ‘northern’ character of the late-Roman state.

Finally, the established urban complex of the Mediterranean basin was substantially shielded from the third-century military upheavals; and there seems no strong link between the transition from early to late empire and the decisive emergence of a split between ‘Latin west’ and ‘Greek east’ within this Mediterranean urban milieu. As Peter Brown points out, “a shift in the center of gravity towards the Greek cities of Asia Minor [and] a flowering of a Greek mandrinate” were both well in train during the second century.³⁷ The one major change to the east Mediterranean urban structure produced by the late empire was precisely the emergence of Constantinople as a great imperial metropolis.

Yet at the beginning of this period, Constantinople was still very much an alien northern capital...[which] brought the majesty of the Roman state into the heart of the Greek world... The deepest division in the society of the fourth century was between north and south, not between east and west. Civilians of the Mediterranean were all of them equally distant from the military court that paced up and down the northern highroads [and] as long as the court maintained its connection with the military, Latin was its spoken language.³⁸

In one sense, Brown suggests, second-century economic and cultural trends in the Greek east “already point in the direction of Byzantium”. But the main thrust of this ‘second Sophistic’ era was one of ‘cultural reaction’, which looked back for political, cultural and even linguistic models to Athens of the fifth century BCE. The ‘revolutionary’ synthesis between Christianity and an east Mediterranean empire embodied in ‘Byzantium proper’ was ‘inconceivable’ to the eastern urban elites of this period. “Such a civilization could only emerge in the late Roman revolution of the third and fourth centuries AD.”³⁹

³⁶ C. Kelly, “Empire building”, in Bowersock, Brown and Grabar, *Late Antiquity*, 177.

³⁷ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 18.

³⁸ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 137-138

³⁹ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 18

By contrast, a shift in focus from cultural trends in the Mediterranean to the geopolitics of the northern frontiers – the terrain on which this late Roman revolution was largely fought out – reveals a fairly clear trajectory leading towards a distinctive ‘eastern empire’ and ultimately to ‘Byzantium proper’. First, the third-century crisis brought an end to any systematic connection between the imperial office and the Latin-speaking elites of the Mediterranean ‘west’. The process of ‘structural differentiation’ in Roman society, with war becoming a specialised activity rather than one “embedded in the totality of the citizen body”, had already civilianised most of the western elites by the later first century CE.⁴⁰ From this point, emperors had been ‘made outside Rome’ in a double sense. Ultimate power came from control of a dominant bloc among the northern legions: but imperial personnel came from a widening circle of ‘new men’ from the west Mediterranean provinces, beginning in 69 CE with the ‘Italian municipal Flavian line’ and proceeding through southern Gaul and Spain to north Africa.⁴¹ The political ascendancy of Italian provincials might be seen as the apotheosis of Octavian’s *Tota Italia* power bloc a century earlier, when Italy was still a major source of Mediterranean infantry. But the subsequent shift of imperial power towards north Africa represented a radical break with the northern trajectory of military power – following instead the shift in the “economic center of the western Mediterranean...into the southern shore” which flowed from the dramatic expansion of commercialised agriculture in general, and of olive oil production in particular, in the Roman era.⁴²

This double movement ‘outside Rome’ culminated with Septimius Severus, a native of Libya who came to power as governor of Pannonia on the Danube. With the end of the Severan dynasty in 235, the tenuous link between military and economic power finally snapped, taking with it the remaining functional role of Rome as a geographical and ideological ‘central place’ between the two. From the mid-third century down into the fifth, soldier-emperors now emerged with ‘arresting regularity’ from the critical strategic and military recruitment zone of the Balkans and middle Danube – “their common regional origin all the more remarkable for the lack of kinship otherwise between them”.⁴³

Second, the military and political centre of gravity on the northern frontiers was also beginning to shift eastwards by the time of Diocletian, in response both to resurgent Persian power under the Sassanids and the new cavalry challenge from the Russian and Danubian steppe. The pivotal strategic position of Constantinople, between the eastern and Danubian frontiers, progressively established it as the

⁴⁰ Cornell, “The end of Roman imperial expansion”, 165-168.

⁴¹ P. Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London 1974), 75.

⁴² D. Mattingly, “First fruit: the olive in the Roman world”, in G. Shipley and J. Salmon (eds), *Human Landscapes in Classical Antiquity* (London 1996), 244-246.

⁴³ Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity*, 88-89.

dominant imperial metropolis in the east. With the Danubian recruiting grounds lost to the eastern military commands through Diocletian's administrative divisions, their place was increasingly taken by the "eastern highlands in Armenia and Isauria", with the latter "now provid[ing] the rising military men...who became high-ranking military officers and even monarchs of the eastern empire in the third quarter of the fifth century".⁴⁴

Third, the cultural and religious complexion of the central Anatolian 'badlands' – which were bisected by the main military road from Constantinople to Antioch and abutted the military recruiting grounds in Isauria and Armenia – was transformed by the geopolitical changes of this period.

The impact of Roman rule was everywhere...the emperors literally owned much of the region. In Cappadocia, the Roman administration supervised vast ranches and huge factories that produced clothing and armor. The imposition of Roman rule encouraged important social and cultural transformations, the spread of Greek culture, and the introduction of exotic cults like Christianity.⁴⁵

It was precisely from such inland regions, where Greek culture was a product of late-Roman rule, that the emerging 'Byzantine' synthesis of Christianity, Greek culture and imperial ideology received its greatest support. While the Greek elites of the Mediterranean littoral "insisted on seeing the Roman world as a mosaic of distinct cities and tribes", Brown observes, "the inhabitants of their hinterland – in Phrygia, Bithynia, Cappadocia – had entered a new world". Cappadocia "became a Greek-speaking province up to the fourteenth century", and "from the fourth century onwards Armenia became a sub-Byzantine province through its ecclesiastical links with Cappadocia".⁴⁶

Thus, despite the intensifying east-west divisions within the northern military establishment and the east Mediterranean location of Constantinople itself, the 'return' of the late Roman state to an urban Mediterranean milieu was protracted in time and limited in extent. For most of the fifth century, the emerging civilian 'mandrinate' at Constantinople had to manoeuvre in the space provided by the competition of Gothic and Isaurian 'federates': it gained real freedom of action only when the Isaurian emperor Zeno died in 491, having just previously managed to divert the Ostrogoths under Theoderic away from the east towards an invasion of Italy.⁴⁷ Both of the great 'civilian' rulers of the sixth century – Anastasius and Justinian – were born in the Balkans, along with the latter's uncle Justin, who came

⁴⁴ Shaw, "War and violence", 154-155.

⁴⁵ R. van Dam, *Kingdom of Snows: Roman rule and Greek culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia 2002), 10.

⁴⁶ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 60-61, 94.

⁴⁷ S. Williams and G. Friell, *The Rome that Did Not Fall: The survival of the East in the fifth century* (London and New York 1999), 173-198, 224-242.

to power through his leadership of the palace guard. Even Heraclius, who led the final rally of the eastern empire in the early seventh century, just decades before the wave of Islamic conquests, was an Armenian who came to power on the platform of his father's position as 'exarch' of Carthage. At no stage in the history of the late Roman state – right down to the seventh-century geopolitical collapse – did the urban elites of the east Mediterranean establish a significant presence at the summit of imperial power.

The survival of Byzantium

The implications of viewing the transition to Byzantium from the perspective of a 'northern' imperial state rather than an east Mediterranean 'archipelago of cities' will be further discussed in the final part of the paper: but a few general comments on its place in the northern trajectory as a whole seem appropriate here. First, centralised imperial states show impressive staying power in the northern trajectory, given the basic logistical constraints on such entities in the pre-industrial world. Even accepting that there were many zigzags between Assyria and Rome, the Rome-Byzantium sequence alone accounts for around twelve centuries – from around 100 BCE to around 1100 CE – after which the crusades, the Latin empire interlude, and the growing Turkish dominance in Anatolia and the Balkans seriously compromise Byzantium's claims as a major presence in its traditional homelands. If one accepts the Ottoman empire as a kind of successor state to Byzantium – and the strategic continuities go further than the continuity of the imperial metropolis – the sequence carries right into the formative period of the 'modern states system' in early modern Europe.

Second, the most impressive manifestation of imperial staying power in the entire trajectory is precisely the late-Rome to Byzantium transition and the subsequent Byzantine survival well into the Middle Ages. Most of this period was shaped by the military dominance of heavy cavalry, and this produced endemic 'feudal' tendencies among the post-imperial successor states in Christian northern Europe and Islamic west Asia. The Byzantine state by and large contained these feudal pressures and outlasted most of its state competitors in both areas, even though the physical resources under its control were arguably less conducive to the long-term maintenance of a heavy cavalry establishment.

Third, one important factor favouring the central state in Byzantium was the logistical advantage conferred by the 'inland sea' configuration of its major territories, which was in some respects tighter than that of both its Roman predecessors and its Ottoman successor. However, these territories had been politically divided for around 500 years of Greek, Persian and Hellenistic contention prior to the Roman conquests in the east. The inland sea configuration of Byzantium was not a 'natural' environmental advantage but a specific

geopolitical inheritance from the Roman empire – and, most immediately, from the embattled ‘northern’ imperial state of the third to fifth centuries CE.

Finally, even given these logistical advantages, the long-term survival of Byzantium in seriously adverse circumstances seems an impressive tribute to the political and ideological strength of the imperial state apparatus. This seems to be an area where an explicit bias towards geopolitical criteria discloses an important explanatory gap, which can be persuasively filled only by reference to cultural and institutional continuities between the late Roman empire and its Byzantine successor.⁴⁸ This, of course, is precisely what the ‘new Rome’ continuity thesis is ostensibly about: but I will try to show below that the specific political geography of the transition from Rome to Byzantium occupies a surprisingly marginal place in the geocultural version of the late antiquity problematic.

Part 3: The geocultural problematic and the southern ‘civilisational’ trajectory

This final part explores a series of overlapping themes in the *geocultural* problematic, comparing its implications to those of my geopolitical problematic in terms of the contrast spelled at the start of the paper: between questions explicitly addressed or highlighted and questions implicitly suppressed or marginalised. I begin with an extended quotation from the 1999 introduction to *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Post Classical World*, edited by G.W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar, but thereafter rely solely on Brown (various works over three decades) and Garth Fowden (only his 1991 book *Empire to Commonwealth*, which tends to push core geocultural themes to their logical conclusion). I think the result is more than just a custom-built straw man – that it does identify an important logical tendency within the late antiquity literature. However, it depends on selective quotation from limited sources and, especially in the case of Brown, I am conscious that it involves some procrustean surgery on the empirical richness and analytical nuance of the originals.⁴⁹

Late antiquity, the editors assert, was “a distinctive and decisive period of history that stands on its own”, stretching from around 250 to 800 C.E. It was also a “remarkable age of empires”. In 250, “the most populous and long-settled regions of western Eurasia, which stretched in a great arc from the Atlantic coasts of

⁴⁸ Thus John Haldon concludes, on the basis of an explicitly Marxist analysis, that “up to the eleventh century at least, the transformed structures of the ancient state, grafted into the feudal mode of production, provided the dominant structures of the Byzantine social formation...[and] held the continued expansion of privatised feudal relations back” (*Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The transformation of a culture* [Cambridge 1990], 458).

⁴⁹ Brown provides a particularly nuanced discussion of the implications of recent archaeological discoveries in the revised edition of *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and diversity, AD 200-1000* (Oxford 2003).

France, Portugal, and Morocco...as far as Afghanistan”, were controlled by “two – and only two – immense imperial systems: the Roman empire and the Sassanian empire of Persia”. By 800, the latter had formally disappeared completely, though leaving “a model of empire as enduring, for the populations of Islamic Asia, as the myth of Rome for the Christians of Western Europe”. As for the former:

The Roman empire was still there. From Calabria, across the southern Balkans, and deep into Anatolia, the territories of what we call, by a modern misnomer redolent of ill-informed contempt, the ‘Byzantine’ empire, had been ruled continuously for over eight hundred years by the direct successors of the heirs of Augustus...

In 800 also, from central Asia to the plateau of Castile, an Islamic caliphate, created at headlong speed by the Arab conquests of the 7th century, had gained stability by settling back into the habits of the ancient empires it had replaced. The tax system of the Islamic empire continued with little break the practices of the Roman and Sassanian states. Its coins were *denarii*, *dinars*. The system of post horses and of governmental information on which its extended rule depended was called after its Roman predecessor *veredus*, *al-barid*. Its most significant enemy was still known, in Arabic, as the empire of Rum – the empire of Rome in the east, centred on Constantinople.⁵⁰

‘Islam’ versus ‘Rome’

On the face of it, this is a forceful statement of the ‘New Rome’ continuity theme, which accords Byzantium exceptional status as the sole interesting/important heir to Rome itself. However, a closer consideration of the specific political geography implied here reveals important ambiguities. First, the claim that “the Roman empire was still there” in 800 shows a striking indifference to the collapse of the empire as a single geopolitical unit (and as a single imperial political economy), which fell squarely in the middle of the designated period. Most obviously, this formulation downgrades the importance of the Roman imperial role, and any succession thereto, in the northwest Mediterranean and northern Europe. But even the ‘eastern empire’ becomes a relatively insignificant adjunct to the ‘main line’ of urban civilisation in the Mediterranean and its surrounds from the early seventh century onwards.

Inevitably, this directs attention to the civilisational continuities represented by Islam; and Brown emphasises the need to surmount the “insuperable imaginative barrier” erected by the Islamic conquests “between ourselves and an ancient Christian world where north Africa, Egypt and Syria had been the most populous and creative regions of the Christian world”.⁵¹ In effect he advocates a ‘counter-Pirenne thesis’ on the relationship between those conquests and the alleged post-

⁵⁰ Bowersock, Brown and Grabar, *Late Antiquity*, Introduction, p. vii, emphasis added.

⁵¹ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 3.

Roman unity of the Mediterranean world. “The verdict of archaeology is now clear...there had never been an economic unity to be destroyed.” Western Europe, in particular, was already by 600 in such a state “of total economic ‘involution’...[that] there was no there there”.⁵²

Fowden states the same position in more systematic and unequivocal fashion. “The roles of Iran and Islam”, he states,

are still marginalized in works that treat late antiquity in terms of the ‘formation of Christendom’. Islam, in particular...continues to be treated as an intrusion, a narrowing of Christianity’s eastern and southern horizons, rather than rooted in antiquity, even consummating it.

In reality, “the triumph of Islam brought greater unity” to the “eastern, southern and (for a time) western shores” of the Mediterranean world.

If anything, it was the northern shores, from southern France to Cilicia, that were in disarray... If the Latinist has late antiquity culminate with Augustine, while the Hellenist...can hardly ignore the seventh century’s political collapse, the Islamist deals with a world that enjoyed an obvious advantage in terms of leisure to work the old problems through one more time... The present essay suggests that, by maintaining the traditional Greco-Roman standpoint, we miss our period’s main thrust.⁵³

Byzantium thus starts out a favoured son in the parcelling up of the post-Roman inheritance but ends up more like a marginalised distant relative. The key to this paradox, I think, is that ‘Rome’ and ‘Byzantium’ are both *territorial states*, with the latter left occupying a much reduced and relatively poor component of the imperial ‘space’ of the former. But ‘Islam’ is a *trans-state civilisation*, which occupies not just a larger and richer component of the post-Roman space but virtually all the post-Sassanid space as well. Moreover, the Roman territories falling to Islam can almost all be seen as civilised before the Roman takeover, so that, in entering the orbit of this transcendent civilisation, they are in a sense returning home.

‘Culture’ and ‘institutions’ versus ‘logistics’ and ‘geopolitics’

Implicit in this indifference to the negative significance of Roman geopolitical collapse is an equally striking indifference to the positive significance of Rome’s original logistical and geopolitical achievements: in bringing the entire

⁵² Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 12 (“no there there” echoes Gertrude Stein’s comment on Oakland, California).

⁵³ G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of monotheism in late antiquity* (Princeton 1993), 10-1, 141.

Mediterranean basin and vast continental regions adjoining it under unified political control, and in underpinning the long-distance transport of staple foods and other bulk goods around the empire to armies, great urban centres and frontier societies – for upwards of five centuries. This seems in turn to flow from a general indifference to logistics and geopolitics in defining what is historically interesting about the rise and fall of ancient empires.

Thus the *Late Antiquity* editors contrast late and classical antiquity in words which contain fascinating echoes of the Marxist base-superstructure metaphor, but in which both elements of the contrast are confined firmly to the realm of culture, religion and institutional arrangements. Late antiquity, they suggest, produced “the solid, almost unseen ground-course of institutions that still lie at the foundations of our own world”. By comparison, “the earlier classical period of the ancient world has a surreal, almost weightless character about it. It is the Dream Time of Western Civilization.”⁵⁴ This line on classical antiquity is understandable as a reaction to the excessive emphasis on the Greek *polis* world in some ‘Plato to NATO’ accounts of the ‘rise of the west’: and if one equates the Roman state with the ‘tiny’ civilian bureaucracy it might also seem true of Rome as well. However, if one looks instead at what the informal Roman army-state of the early empire actually achieved, the picture is very different.

Was the Roman network of roads, aqueducts, military fortifications, etc, surreal and weightless? Or the great maritime ‘trunk routes’, transcending vast stretches of open sea out of sight of land – which, in Braudel’s account of the *longue durée*, normally loomed as “marine deserts...enormous, dangerous and forbidden stretches, no man’s lands separating different worlds”?⁵⁵ Or the “great water [and road] route” along the North Sea-Rhine-Danube frontier – inconceivable without the ongoing support of an advanced military machine, but underpinning a “single social and economic region...from the Black Sea to Hadrian’s Wall”?⁵⁶ These logistical achievements are unmatched in the history of pre-industrial state-making (and ‘economy-making’) in western Eurasia, either before or after the Roman period.

The accumulation of archaeological evidence over recent decades seems increasingly to suggest that these logistical transformations produced levels of economic integration under the Roman empire well beyond those predicted by the ‘minimalist’ model of the ‘ancient economy’ associated with Moses Finley. At the most general level, comparative data on Mediterranean shipwrecks show a dramatic upsurge in the Roman period, in comparison not just with the periods immediately preceding and following it, but also with “the commercial boom

⁵⁴ Bowersock, Brown and Grabar, *Late Antiquity*, Introduction, p. x.

⁵⁵ Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world*, 133.

⁵⁶ S. Drummond and L. Nelson, *The Western Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (Armonk 1994), 12, 69-70.

which, on the conventional view, began in the thirteenth century". There are obvious problems with relying on one such indicator across such a wide span of time. But Peregrine Hordern and Nicholas Purcell – who are typically sceptical of bullish claims about the scale of Mediterranean ‘high commerce’ – conclude that “this pattern” may well reflect “a real quantitative difference...that, on some notional scale of quantity or values, second-century trade was significantly greater than trade at any other time before the nineteenth century”.⁵⁷

At the level of specific commodities, David Mattingly makes a strong case for the transformation of production and distribution patterns in the signature Mediterranean food product – olive oil. Detailed studies of the north African situation indicate that “African olive oil had access to a remarkably large and lucrative free market”, with dramatic production increases in established areas like the Carthage region and Tripolitana and specialist olive cultivation also extending into “the Tunisian Sahel and high steppe”. He estimates that ‘peak’ Roman-era production was “at least a quarter or a half of modern levels”, and that Roman olive presses had a “capacity to process in bulk that has not been equalled until the modern era”. This “understanding of the significance of olive oil in the Roman world”, Mattingly concludes, “involves embracing a very far from minimalist model of the ancient economy”.⁵⁸

Finally, the tendency to marginalise logistical questions seems to produce substantial distortions in the geocultural case for continuity in the Rome to Islam transition as well. As noted above, the *Late Antiquity* editors highlight the *continuity in terminology* from Rome to Islam in the government system of fast post-horse communications. But behind this limited continuity at the top political level lay a fundamental discontinuity at the level of ordinary bulk goods transport: the replacement of wheeled vehicles by pack camels around the eastern and southern perimeter of the Mediterranean. According to Richard Bulliet, this was the result of “perhaps five hundred years of gradual change”, roughly coincident with the period of the Roman empire, which eventually had ‘uniform’ and ‘far-reaching’ effects on the settled societies of the Middle East. “Wheeled transport [had] virtually disappeared from the Middle East by the time of the Islamic conquests, except in Anatolia, which was probably too cold for the Arab’s camels.”⁵⁹ The prior diffusion of the camel economy was presumably a major factor facilitating the Arab conquests; and the climatic barriers to its spread in Anatolia were presumably important in the survival of Byzantium.

⁵⁷ Hordern and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 371-372.

⁵⁸ Mattingly, “First fruit: the olive in the Roman world”, 239-241, 236; see also R. Hitchner, “Olive production and the Roman economy: the case for intensive growth in the Roman empire”, in W. Scheidel and S. von Reiden (eds), *The Ancient Economy* (Edinburgh 2002), 71-83.

⁵⁹ R. Bulliet, *The Camel and Wheel* (Cambridge, Mass. 1975), 110; also Bulliet’s entry on ‘camels’ in Bowersock, Brown and Grabar, *Late Antiquity*, 360.

Moreover, the expansion of camel transport was only one part of a three-pronged transformation in the basic conditions of 'material life' across west Asia and north Africa – the others being the westward spread of date palm plantations and of eastern techniques of water management. Each preceded the Islamic conquests but was in turn accelerated by them, and collectively they shifted the economic and military balance between arid zone and Mediterranean littoral regions strongly in favour of the former. As Maurice Lombard notes, the date palm had already spread from Mesopotamia to southern Syria, Egypt and Tunisia before the rise of Islam.

With the conquests, it spread still further into northern Syria, Cilicia ...Spain...and above all into the western Sahara, where the increase in camel-rearing, well-boring and palm-growing were interconnected and were the essential factors in the colonization of the desert.⁶⁰

The transformation of northwest Africa seems to have been particularly profound. This had been an advanced base for the westward spread of Mediterranean agriculture, the Mediterranean food complex and Mediterranean urban civilisation since Punic/Carthaginian times. By contrast it was one of the last major regions to experience the full impact of the 'Islamic' material culture package described above. It became a "vast storehouse of military power" in the Islamic period:⁶¹ but the Mediterranean urban fabric of Roman-era north Africa was progressively undermined by repeated cycles of military conquest from the interior. Given material and geopolitical changes of this magnitude, the whole notion of deep continuities between the Roman and Islamic periods must be seriously qualified.

'Commonwealths' versus 'empires'

It seems possible that precisely because the logistical achievements of the Roman empire were so nearly unique, they appear theoretically 'uninteresting' to the 'civilisational' biases of the geocultural problematic. Its protagonists evidently start from the assumption that, in the *long term*, effective politico-economic integration of territories on the scale associated with 'Rome' or 'Islam' was not a serious proposition in the ancient world. Brown describes Rome's eastern provinces in the fourth century as "a mighty confederation of regions", united in principle by claims for "loyalty to a theoretically undivided Roman empire" and in practice by pride "in sharing a common Greek culture".⁶² Fowden asserts that the Islamic conquests produced "antiquity's one and only true world empire": but goes on to identify the operational period of this 'Islamic empire' with the last fifty years of the Umayyad

⁶⁰ M. Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam* (Amsterdam 1975), 166-167.

⁶¹ Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, 55-56.

⁶² P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian empire* (Madison 1992), 5.

Caliphate and first fifty years of the Abbasid Caliphate – effectively ignoring the geopolitical and logistical transformations involved in the imperial centre-shift between these two entities.⁶³

Fowden's core criteria for 'world empire' are transparently *geocultural* not *geopolitical* in terms of the contrast proposed in this paper. Such an empire must encompass the three original core regions of ancient civilisation in western Eurasia: the Iranian plateau, the eastern Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent, "the conceptual as well as the actual center of the southwest Asian world". This package was tentatively assembled under the Achaemenids and Alexander, broken up for a thousand years by the contention of independent powers based in Iran and the Mediterranean, and finally re-assembled under Islam.⁶⁴

As the intervening *longue durée* had eloquently demonstrated, an enduring 'world empire' of this kind was a logistical impossibility. Thus Fowden's 'old problems' are effectively those of preserving a measure of cultural and (within strict limits) economic integration across former imperial territories after the empire's inevitable decay. The critical new ingredient – first manifest in late antiquity and most fully realised under Islam – was the incorporation of "universalist monotheism" in the ideological program of "an aspiring or realized world empire".

Late antiquity's contribution to the technique of empire was the discovery of a non-military and only partly political basis for self-perpetuation...monotheism as the legitimator and even motor of multi-ethnic politico-cultural federations.⁶⁵

A transient period of 'empire' was crucial as the platform for the early spread of such religions. But of greater long-term significance was "that much looser, more pluralistic type of structure we call *commonwealth*...a group of politically discrete but related polities collectively distinguishable from other polities or commonwealths by a shared culture and history".⁶⁶

Fowden's discussion of commonwealth clearly draws on Dmitri Obolensky's notion of a 'Byzantine Commonwealth' in mediaeval eastern Europe and western Russia.⁶⁷ Indeed, he explicitly rechristens this the 'Second Byzantine Commonwealth', to make way for a 'First Byzantine Commonwealth' – stretching from Armenia to Ethiopia, and flourishing from the fourth to the sixth century CE – which he presents as the second core theme of his study, along with his emphasis on the centrality of Islam.⁶⁸

⁶³ Fowden, *Empire into Commonwealth*, 6-7, 152.

⁶⁴ Fowden, *Empire into Commonwealth*, 61-62.

⁶⁵ Fowden, *Empire into Commonwealth*, 169-170.

⁶⁶ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 9-10, 100-137.

⁶⁷ D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London 1974).

⁶⁸ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 169.

Once again, Byzantium *appears* to be a lead player in this scenario, receiving credit for inspiring two commonwealths outside its home territory. However, the long term survival of Byzantium proper as an effectively centralised territorial empire is regarded as relatively uninteresting. Byzantium was an “anomalous survivor from among the antique empires”, Fowden concludes: but “empires antiquity had produced abundantly in all phases of its history”. It is “the commonwealths that constitute late antiquity’s distinctive socio-political legacy, for...it was the commonwealths that provided most people with a frame of reference wider than the state to which they were immediately subject.”⁶⁹

The ‘first Byzantine Commonwealth’, moreover, is a murky concept, which similarly marginalises the distinctive geographical trajectory of Byzantium. Temporally, it seems to require an uncritical identification of ‘Byzantium’ with a Mediterranean-based ‘eastern empire’ from a very early stage. Spatially, it links Armenia, which was closely involved in the late-Roman to Byzantine state-making trajectory throughout late antiquity and into the middle ages, with Ethiopia and southwest Arabia, which had only indirect connections to the late Roman empire and none at all to Byzantium from the seventh century onwards. Ultimately, Fowden concludes:

The [first] Byzantine Commonwealth is more interesting...as precursor than as survivor... It fell to the Muslim conqueror to realize fully [its] political potential – but not as a Byzantine Commonwealth...to an extraordinary extent, both politically and culturally, Islam and its empire was already present in late antiquity.⁷⁰

Ecologically-embedded ‘archipelagos of cities’ versus state-constructed ‘inland seas’

It is clear that there is nothing inherently idealist about an interest in the phenomenon of multiple polities more or less united by an overarching ‘hegemonic’ culture – whatever might be said of Fowden’s particular line on this question. Themes similar to his ‘commonwealth’ appear in many analyses of both classical and late antiquity, often linked to some notion of an ‘archipelago of cities’ which is, to a greater or lesser degree, embedded in the nature of the physical environment. This section starts with two areas in which this notion of embedded urban archipelagos seems particularly persuasive: the mediaeval arid zone under Islam and the Mediterranean ‘polis world’ of archaic and early classical Greece. It then turns to the geopolitical and historical ‘middle ground’ between these extremes which constitutes the terrain of Mediterranean late antiquity and the prelude to Byzantium.

⁶⁹ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 169.

⁷⁰ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 135-137

To begin with the arid zone. First, this region as a whole was unimaginably vast in the logistical context of pre-industrial land travel, forming a virtually unbroken belt across western Eurasia and indeed reaching into the northern regions of China and the Indian sub-continent. Second, the relatively few ‘islands’ of substantial irrigation agriculture were widely scattered across the vast ‘sea’ of deserts, semi-deserts and dry steppes; and routine land connections between them were necessarily in the hands of nomadic pastoralists who had developed the specialist food production and transport regimes to survive outside the densely settled regions. Third, it was predominantly an ‘area of inland drainage’: and in those few critical areas where major rivers actually reached a major sea – such as the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf – the logistical advantages this conferred were calculated to pull that particular ‘oasis’ region towards the adjoining sea, not link it to other oasis regions across the adjoining desert.⁷¹

As suggested earlier, these environmental conditions placed insuperable logistical obstacles in the way of a ‘true world empire’ in Fowden’s sense, foreshadowed by the Achaemenids and Alexander and allegedly consummated by Islam. But even more important, the prospects for a single, reasonably effective imperial state linking several great oasis regions of western Eurasia were in some respects *less in the Islamic period than in classical antiquity*. On the one hand, the intensification over the preceding millennium of material production and urban civilisation in the scattered archipelago of irrigation agriculture cores had made each of them more impervious to long term control from a single arid zone power centre. On the other, the progressive merging of nomadic pastoralist and irrigation agriculture economies had shifted the irrigation cores around the Mediterranean further into the geopolitical orbit of the desert and away from that of the inland sea.

These relationships emerge very clearly from Lombard’s account of the mediaeval ‘Muslim world’ – an Annales school interpretation with important similarities to the geocultural theme of a southern civilisational trajectory culminating in Islam. “From Samarkand to Cordoba”, Lombard argues, Islam presided over a “syncretic” but “remarkably unified” urban civilisation. But given its ecological context, this civilisation could never be articulated from a single core. It necessarily took the form of a “series of urban islands linked by trade routes”; and the *progressive economic strengthening of these component islands* over the ninth and tenth centuries was inevitably accompanied by the *progressive weakening of centralised political control*. This dual process, he observes, “has been called, mistakenly...‘the dismemberment of the Abbasid Caliphate’; it would be far better to call it the development of the Muslim World”. But beyond the immediate question of political configurations in Islam lies the more basic point about environment and history in the arid zone. “The Muslim world from the

⁷¹ See the survey in E. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley 1982), 25-58.

eighth to the eleventh centuries was...the point of arrival...of an even longer history, namely the history of the urban civilizations of the ancient east".⁷²

Thus the archipelagic image of the arid zone/oasis world is obviously metaphorical, an ironic tribute to the dominance of the region by vast distances and unmasterable continental land-masses: but precisely because it focuses on these logistical constraints of land travel, it is all the more convincing as a symbol of the pre-industrial *longue durée* across this region. By contrast, the archipelago motif is virtually a literal description of the *maritime closeness and intimacy* of the ancient Greek polis world – highlighting the extraordinary collection of islands and ‘almost islands’ centred on the Aegean and its littoral zones, with projections westwards towards Sicily and southern Italy and eastwards, past the site of Byzantium, to certain fringe regions of the Black Sea.

As Colin McEvedy has shown, Plato’s dictum about ‘frogs around a pond’ can be translated into the comparative geographic model of a ‘littoral ecosphere’, in which persistently indented or ‘redundant’ coastline provides any given littoral community with more ready connections to other littoral communities than to inland communities in its apparent hinterland. “This theoretical analysis suggests that it is redundant coastline that generates the social cohesion necessary for the transformation of series of littoral communities into an ecosphere.”

It was presumably these exceptional littoral characteristics that made the Greeks ‘Greek’ in the first place, and that gave them a blueprint for desirable new sites in their eastward and westward expansion through the greater Mediterranean basin. McEvedy shows that a ‘purely geographical manipulation’ of the Mediterranean coastline to pick out littoral ecospheres defined in this fashion produces a ‘surprisingly good’ fit with the eventual Greek polis world, with most of the ambiguous cases reflecting the countervailing power of other littoral and near-littoral communities, especially in the western Mediterranean.⁷³ Similarly, this very distinctive geography presumably nurtured the strong Greek sense of their distinctiveness relative to surrounding ‘barbarian’ populations, and the characteristic Greek combination of intense military competition among *poleis* with a strong sense of belonging to a broader community or *koinon* (literally ‘thing in common’).⁷⁴

This ‘archipelagic’ face of the Mediterranean has been highly influential across a range of discourses. It is an important comparative reference point for the notion of a ‘Tyrrhenian koine’ around the west and south-west coasts of archaic and early classical Italy, before the definitive ‘rise of Rome’.⁷⁵ It effectively provides a generalised notion of Mediterranean ecological determinants in the minimalist

⁷² Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, 4-5.

⁷³ C. McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History* (Harmondsworth 1967), 10-11.

⁷⁴ G. Shipley, *The Greek World after Alexander: 393-330 BC* (London 2000), 133.

⁷⁵ See, in particular, Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, 163-172.

‘Finley model’ of the ancient economy. It is a recurrent theme of Braudel’s account of ‘the role of the environment’; and is if anything even more strongly pushed in Horden and Purcell’s delineation of a Mediterranean of ‘microecologies’ – of “short distances and definite places”.⁷⁶ Last, but not least, it is the face which launched a thousand cookbooks, in relentless celebration of the extraordinary unity-in-diversity of the regional cuisines to be unearthed around each new headland of the wine-dark sea.⁷⁷

Despite its pervasiveness across the *longue durée*, however, this archipelagic tendency towards decentralised urban ‘confederations’ or ‘commonwealths’ was clearly not an environmental given in the Mediterranean world as it was in the arid zone. No imperial order could transform the basic logistical constraints on bulk transport in the arid zone: but Mediterranean transport logistics *were* substantially shifted from the archipelagic to the inland sea end of the spectrum in the Roman era. In effect the Roman state *constructed* the Mediterranean as an inland sea, by ‘surrounding’ it with the integrated transport network, and integrated military establishment, of a single great *land* empire. As a consequence, economic integration between Mediterranean and arid zone urban networks – still embryonic in the Hellenistic period – was lifted to a qualitatively new level. The Roman-era deviation from the Mediterranean *longue durée* may have lasted for ‘only’ five centuries: but both chronologically and conceptually it is the obvious place to look for the origins of Byzantium.

The dominant tendency in the geocultural problematic, however, is to marginalise these discontinuities with the pre-Roman situation at the level of geopolitics and political economy, and to highlight continuities at the cultural level, especially in the ‘Greek east’. Brown, for instance, invokes the metaphor of an east Roman urban archipelago in his account of the spread of Greek culture into the continental hinterlands of the east Mediterranean basin in the third and fourth centuries CE.

The culture of late antiquity depended on an archipelago of cities. In this archipelago, the islands still clustered significantly in the areas of densest urban life and long exposure to Greek civilization – that is, around the Aegean and along the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean. Hence the sons of the gentry from the less privileged provinces (such as Armenia, Arabia and Cappadocia) engaged in vigorous ‘island hopping’, making their way to major centers – Athens, Antioch, Gaza and Alexandria – in order to complete their education.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, Part II.

⁷⁷ See, for instance, J. Weir, *From Tapas to Meze: First courses from the Mediterranean shores of Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa* (New York 1994).

⁷⁸ Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 37.

When he turns to the expansion of Christianity, the metaphor is extended to the original imperial heartland in the western Mediterranean. The Christian church grew out of “a Mediterranean-wide style of urban civilization”. It “fed its imagination on Palestine and Syria”: but

its intellectual powerhouse in the Latin world was north Africa, and in this Africa, Carthage, ‘Rome in Africa’, remained, like Rome, a great Mediterranean town, moving to rhythms strangely similar to those of Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople.⁷⁹

As noted several times already, the consequence of applying this *Mediterranean* and *urbanist* continuity thesis to the transitions of late antiquity is that the ‘main line’ of civilisational continuity runs through ‘Islam’, while Byzantium becomes little more than a branch line into relatively unimportant territory. Brown draws the moral quite explicitly in regard to the rapid collapse of Justinian’s reconquests in the west:

Fragile though these Byzantine outposts were, they ensured that the southern shores of the Mediterranean belonged to an empire whose heart lay in the Middle East...[and were] sharply distinguished from underdeveloped territories to their north... The diagonal division of the Mediterranean into two societies, so that a Near Eastern empire came to stretch like the long, sloping plane of a wedge from Antioch to the valley of the Guadalquivir, was the most marked feature of the Western Middle Ages. The division was begun with the conquests of Justinian. Except at Rome and Ravenna, the Muslims stepped straight into the inheritance of the Byzantine exarchs.⁸⁰

Finally, the marginal status of Byzantium in this ‘archipelago of cities’ story is not simply a matter of the loss of great urban centres like Antioch, Alexandria and Carthage, in regions which fell permanently to the Islamic conquests. As John Haldon points out, major regional cities were “almost totally eclipsed” in the seventh-century crisis, even in the territories which eventually remained under Byzantine control, leaving “effectively an empire of one major urban centre, together with a few fortunate provincial...emporium or ports”. This completely undermined the Roman-era taxation structure, with corresponding transformations across the emerging Byzantine social formation.

Late Roman urban culture vanishes entirely, along with much of the cultural baggage carried with it. Instead, new systems of thought develop, new approaches to art and representation are refined, new administrative structures

⁷⁹ P. Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London 1982), 168.

⁸⁰ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 158-159.

are evolved. Power relations within the ruling elite also change – the old senatorial establishment...disappears, to be replaced by a very different elite, of different social, cultural and often ethnic origins.⁸¹

The scale of these changes, Haldon argues, is so great that continuity theories making Byzantium the inheritor of late-Roman Mediterranean civilisation largely miss the point. My argument has been that a different type of continuity thesis, making Byzantium the inheritor of a ‘northern’ (and predominantly military) late-Roman state is considerably more plausible. The Rome-Byzantium transition suggested by this alternative continuity thesis is still a remarkable achievement of cultural and institutional adaptation. But as indicated by Fowden’s description of Byzantium as an ‘anomalous’ imperial survival into an age of commonwealths, the story does not resonate well with the civilisational biases of the geocultural problematic. A transition in which an imperial state withers away but cities survive is interesting and important from the geocultural perspective: a transition in which cities wither away but an imperial state survives is not.

Towards the artifice of eternity

“In the fifth and sixth centuries”, Peter Brown observes, “Constantinople combined the pride of a city state and the high morale of an outpost with the resources of a vast, Near Eastern Empire.”⁸² Some 300 years later, on the other side of the seventh-century crisis, the structural relationship between metropolis and frontier remained remarkably similar: but the type of empire represented by Constantinople, and its relationship to the broader fabric of Mediterranean urbanism had undergone a radical transformation.

Greek had long ago replaced Latin as the court language, and Constantinople had gone from being an ‘alien’ bridgehead of the Roman state ‘in the heart of the Greek world’ to the metropolitan core of high Greek culture. From being just one of many great cities around the east Mediterranean littoral – and in many ways still more alien to east Mediterranean culture than up-river Antioch – it was now the sole Mediterranean metropolis in the region. Instead of being just the current resting place of a semi-nomadic military state – locked in a damaging structural conflict over tax revenues with entrenched and ‘localist’ civilian elites in the Mediterranean cities – it was the long-standing base of a centralising civilian bureaucracy, in a condition of incipient structural conflict with an emerging semi-feudal military in the rural hinterlands.

I have suggested that these transformations can be best understood – and best reconciled with a continuity thesis about the Rome-Byzantium transition – by

⁸¹ Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 445.

⁸² Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 137-138

focusing on shifting relationships between metropolis, hinterland and frontier in the trajectory of a 'northern' late-Roman state. Around 200 CE, Rome was a huge 'cosmopolis', whose unprecedented 'inland sea' logistical advantages allowed it to draw on the resources of multiple hinterlands around the Mediterranean and even in northern Europe. It was a great imperial symbol, centre of patronage and cultural mecca: but already it had only a relatively tangential relationship to the regular operations of the imperial state 'apparatus'.

The north European 'tetrarchic capitals' of the third and fourth centuries were tiny by comparison, and strung out along an over-extended frontier zone in which none had unequivocal strategic pre-eminence. The situation of the soldier-emperors who 'paced up and down the northern roads' in this period is reminiscent of mediaeval European monarchs moving between little regional 'capitals' in their loosely held feudal domains. However, they carried a genuinely imperial apparatus in their train; and although this represented a level of bureaucratic capacity which no subsequent feudal state could match, it also meant that even a temporary imperial residence placed very heavy burdens on the local hinterland of a given tetrarchic capital. Logistical considerations alone would have prevented any of these capitals from rising to genuine 'new Rome' status, even if the issue of strategic pre-eminence had been clearer.

These contradictions were resolved, for the 'eastern empire' at least, by the rise of Constantinople. Emperor, court and imperial bureaucracy were now domiciled together in a major metropolitan centre where the fundamentals of Mediterranean material culture were not exotic imports but common products of the local environment. Though directly on the Mediterranean, Constantinople was also strategically located near the critical pressure points of the eastern and northern frontiers. Above all, its residual 'inland sea' inheritance from the late-Roman state enhanced its military advantages in internal lines of communication relative to its enemies, and allowed it to 'live of its own' on the resources of relatively close hinterlands well into the mediaeval period.

By around 800, the northern trajectory of west Eurasian state-making had returned (almost) to where it started, "know[ing] the place for the first time". From its first, ambiguous foray into the fragmented archipelago of the northeast Mediterranean and the Greek polis world, it had moved in a great loop through the northwest Mediterranean, into the zone of the north European rivers and back down the Danube – to the "natural fortress and...matchless deep-water port" at the junction of the Black and Aegean seas. It had come not just to the great Mediterranean metropolis of Constantinople, but also to the enduring politico-cultural formation of Byzantium. But not by sailing.

Matthew J Martin

Communal Meals in the late antique Synagogue

An often-quoted passage in Tosefta states:

One should not behave light-heartedly in a synagogue. One should not enter synagogues light-heartedly. One should not enter them in the heat because of the heat, nor in the cold because of the cold, nor in the rain because of the rain. And one should not eat in them nor drink in them nor sleep in them, nor relax in them, but one should read Scriptures and study mishnah and engage in midrash in them. A public eulogy may be delivered therein. Rabbi Judah [b.ilai] said: 'The above relates to a standing synagogue, but if destroyed, they are to be left alone, and let grass grow there as a sign of sadness'. (TMegillah 2.18)

This passage is of some interest. It sets forth a list of those activities that are deemed appropriate by rabbinic authorities to the setting of the synagogue – in particular, the study of Scripture and the oral law. These activities are juxtaposed with a catalogue of other activities that the rabbis consider inappropriate to what they construe as a place of worship. In this passage we appear to be granted a brief glimpse of a struggle going on over the definition of the very nature of the synagogue as a Jewish institution. The rabbis claim the synagogue as an institution of worship after their notion of appropriate Jewish piety. For the rabbis, the synagogue is a holy place whose sanctity derives from the presence of the Torah scrolls therein.¹ By contrast, the activities condemned by the rabbis in this passage of Tosefta appear to reflect an understanding of the synagogue as a community institution where a range of activities might take place, some more overtly sacred in character than others. In this context, the question of communal dining in the late antique synagogue is of some interest for, despite the clear prohibition of eating and drinking in the synagogue contained in TMegillah 2.18, there exists a not insubstantial body of evidence to indicate that, in the period prior to the sixth century CE, communal meals *were* consumed in Jewish synagogues in Palestine and elsewhere. In the following, an attempt will be made to explore how this rabbinic prohibition on dining in the synagogue might be reconciled with the fact that public banqueting appears to have been a facet of late antique synagogue life.

¹ On this rabbinic understanding of the sanctity of the synagogue, see S. Fine, *This Holy Place. On the sanctity of the synagogue during the Greco-Roman period* (Notre Dame, Ind. 1997).

In turn, it will be argued that this phenomenon has important implications for assessing the extent to which the nascent rabbinic movement was able to exercise authority in the Palestinian synagogues of this period.

The Rabbinic Position

The tradition in our Tosefta which includes the prohibition on eating and drinking in the synagogue is not found in the corresponding Mishnah. It is found, however, in both the Yerushalmi (YMegillah 3.3) and the Bavli (BMegillah 28a-b).² Although our Tosefta might at first appear to be merely an exhortation to approach the synagogue with the respect and decorum appropriate to a place of worship, close scrutiny of the activities catalogued suggests that the implications of this passage are more weighty. As we have suggested above, it would appear that a clear statement is being made by the authorities responsible for the redaction of the Tosefta concerning appropriate expressions of Jewish piety in the context of the synagogue. Such piety is embodied primarily in the activities of reading and exposition of Scripture, and teaching of the oral law. Rabbi Judah b. Ilai reveals that the synagogue is a holy place, possessed of a sanctity which may endure even beyond its destruction. Study of Scripture and the oral law is contrasted by our Tosefta with a catalogue of activities which are pejoratively labelled as exercises in frivolity. But this list of prescribed activities is by no means assembled at random. The activities enumerated are all activities for which literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidence exists to indicate the actuality of their performance in Jewish synagogues throughout the Roman world. The Second Temple period synagogue quite clearly possessed functions as a community centre – as a place of gathering and socialising, of conducting business (both legal and commercial), of accommodation for pilgrims, of charity and of commensality – in addition to its functions as a place where Scripture was studied and eulogies delivered.³ These functions of the synagogue also clearly continued, in various locales, into the post-destruction period.⁴ Whilst it is the issue of commensality and synagogue dining which forms our specific interest here, it is clear that this larger catalogue of activities contained in TMegillah 2.18 represents activities that had a long history of association with the synagogue, but which did not conform with developing

² Other rabbinic sources appear to make a clear, possibly polemical, distinction between the activities of dining on the one hand, and attending synagogue on the other (*Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 1; *Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana* 28:1).

³ E.g. communal gathering: Josephus, *Vita* 271-298; business: professional guilds in synagogue – TSukkah 4.5; legal: Josephus, *Ant.* 14.235; Matt. 10:17-18; Matt. 23:24; CIJ 1, 683; hostel: Theodotos Inscription, see n. 9 below; charity: TShabbat 16.22; Matt. 6:2. See L. Levine *The Ancient Synagogue: The first thousand years* (New Haven and London 2000), 128-134.

⁴ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 177 f. The synagogue as a place where business was conducted is suggested by BMegillah 28b.

rabbinic conceptions of the role and function of this institution. That the rabbinic authorities express disapproval of these activities suggests both that such activities were a reality in the Palestinian synagogues of the period of the redaction of the Tosefta (and, potentially, into the period of the compilation of the Talmuds), and that the ability of the rabbinic authorities to enforce their will in the synagogues of this period was not necessarily a given. Two models of the nature of the synagogue are juxtaposed in our Tosefta. Contrary, perhaps, to expectation, the rabbinic model is not clearly dominant.

The Second Temple Period Background

The practice of communal dining in the synagogue was not an innovation of the late antique period. The earliest evidence for communal dining in the context of the synagogue derives from Ptolemaic period Egypt, as in fact does our earliest evidence for the existence of the synagogue itself.⁵ An important series of dedicatory inscriptions from the delta region indicate the existence of Jewish 'houses of prayer' (*proseuchai*) from as early as the third century BCE.⁶ By the first century BCE, the *proseuche* appears to have developed as a focus for various communal activities amongst the Jewish populations of the Egyptian provinces. A fragmentary papyrus of unknown Egyptian provenance (first century BCE) makes mention of a *synodos*, perhaps a burial society, which held its meetings in a local *proseuche*.⁷ It is very probable that it is in a similar such synagogue context that we should understand the sponsoring of banquets by a Jewish association – whose membership included a *sophos* (the Greek equivalent of Hebrew *hakham*) – mentioned in an ostrakon from Apollinopolis Magna (Edfu) dating to the first century BCE.⁸

From beyond the borders of Egypt, the Theodotos inscription – discovered upon the Ophel in Jerusalem and dating to the first century CE – may, by its mention of a hostel for pilgrims from abroad, imply the existence of dining facilities associated with the synagogue whose embellishment the inscription commemorates. The

⁵ On the evidence for the *proseuche* in Egypt see J. Méléze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton 1995), 87-98.

⁶ CIJ 1440, Schedia, 246-221 BCE; CIJ 1449, Lower Egypt, 246-221 BCE; CIJ 1443, Athribis, 180-145(?) BCE; CIJ 1444, Athribis, 180-145(?) BCE; CIJ 1442, Nitriai, 144-116 BCE; CIJ 1441, Xenephyris, 144-116 BCE; CIJ 1433, Alexandria, second century BCE; CIJ 1432, Alexandria, 36(?) BCE. See W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge 1992).

⁷ *Rylands Papyrus IV 590* = CPJ 1, 138.

⁸ CPJ 1, 139.

inscription certainly indicates that people slept on the premises of the synagogue, another activity forbidden by TMegillah 2.18.⁹

More definite is the evidence to be found in Josephus where mention is made of a decree issued by Julius Caesar to Parium confirming the rights of Jews to assemble in accordance with their native traditions and to collect monies for communal meals.¹⁰ These meals most likely took place in the context of the synagogue, as is suggested by another edict cited by Josephus, this time issued by Augustus, making reference to the sacred books and sacred monies of the Jews which are stored in the *sabbateion* or the *andron* – the Sabbath gathering-place or the dining hall.¹¹

The exact character of these meals is difficult to determine. Whether they represent holiday feasts, regular Sabbath events, meals for travellers or events sponsored by local Jewish associations – or a combination of any and all of these – is not entirely clear.¹² What is clear, however, is that both the Romans and Josephus recognise these meals as important elements of Jewish corporate life and associate these activities with the synagogue. Indeed, many Jewish sectarian groupings of the second Temple period, such as the pharisaic *haburah*, the Essenes, the Alexandrian Therapeutae and the Qumran *yahad*, are known to have regularly conducted communal meals, although, in these instances, there is not always a certain connection between these gatherings and the synagogue.¹³ In the wider pagan world, communal meals consumed on the premises of a temple were a common enough phenomenon, as was the sponsoring of communal banquets by cultic associations and it seems likely that Jewish communal meals held in synagogues probably form an analogue to these activities.¹⁴

⁹ On the Theodotos inscription see M. Martin, “Interpreting the Theodotos Inscription: Some Reflections on a First Century Jerusalem Synagogue Inscription and E.P. Sander’s ‘Common Judaism’”, *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 39 (2002), 160-181 and bibliography there.

¹⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.214-216.

¹¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 16.164.

¹² Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 130.

¹³ Pharisees: J. Neusner, “The Fellowship (Haburah) in the Second Jewish Commonwealth”, *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1960), 125-142; see also n. 24 below; Essenes: Josephus, *War* 2.128-133; Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.5; Therapeutae: Philo, *Vita Cont.* 64-90; Qumran *yahad*: *IQS* 6:4-5; *IQSa* 2:17-21; *Covenant of Damascus* 13:2-3; J. Magness, “Communal Meals and Sacred Space at Qumran”, in S McNally (ed.), *Shaping Community: The art and archaeology of monasticism. Papers from a symposium held at the Frederick R. Weisman museum, University of Minnesota, March 10-12, 2000* (BAR International Series 941, Oxford 2001), 15-28.

¹⁴ Meals in temple precincts: R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven 1981), 36-39. The comparison of the Jewish synagogue with the Graeco-Roman voluntary association is, up to a point, an illuminating exercise – see the important collection of essays: J.S. Kloppenborg and S.G. Wilson (eds), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York 1996). See also now P. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations. Claiming a place in ancient Mediterranean society* (Minneapolis 2003).

The Post-Destruction Era

There is thus sufficient evidence to suggest a tradition of communal dining associated with the institution of the synagogue in the late Second Temple period. This tradition appears to have continued into the post-destruction era, after 70 CE, as is made clear by both archaeological and epigraphical evidence.

The presence of kitchen facilities, consisting of an oven and a marble-topped table, within the synagogue complex in the Roman port of Ostia, probably dating to the fourth century CE, suggests that food was prepared on the synagogue premises.¹⁵ A dedicatory inscription discovered in the synagogue at Stobi in Macedonia (fourth century CE) makes mention of an oven, as well as a *triclinion* within the synagogue complex. Meals were apparently prepared and served in the synagogue.¹⁶ The presence of a *triclinion* is also indicated in a synagogue inscription from Caesarea.¹⁷ An inscription from the synagogue at Qatzrin in the Golan (mid-third to fourth century CE) makes mention of a *revu'ah*, a relatively rare nominal form deriving from a verbal root meaning 'to lie down'¹⁸ and, hence, generally presumed to refer to some form of *triclinion*.¹⁹ The famous Jewish inscription from Aphrodisias in Asia Minor (third century CE), probably, though not certainly, associated with a synagogue, makes mention of a *patella* – a difficult term in the context of the inscription, but usually understood to refer to a soup kitchen established for the distribution of charity to the needy of the community.²⁰ Finally, a fragmentary parchment document discovered in the vicinity of the Dura Europos synagogue on the Euphrates (mid-third century CE) contains a Hebrew

¹⁵ L.M. White, "Synagogue and Society in Imperial Ostia: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence", in K. Donfried and P. Richardson (eds), *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1998), 30-68.

¹⁶ CIJ 694. See M. Hengel, "Die Synagogeinschrift von Stobi", *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 57 (1966), 145-183; W. Pöhlman, "The Polycharmos Inscription and Synagogue I at Stobi", in B. Aleksova and J. Wiseman (eds), *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi*, vol. 3 (Titov Veles 1981), 235-246.

¹⁷ B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 7, Paris 1967), no. 10.

¹⁸ M. Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat Gan 1990), 514

¹⁹ J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions from ancient synagogues* (Jerusalem 1978), no. 110 (Hebrew). This may be compared with the mention of *rab'ata* in a number of Nabataean inscriptions, apparently referring to facilities for cultic meals within temple complexes. See N. Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins* (New York 1965), 163-191; L. Nehme, "RB'T' et 'RB'N' en Nabatéen: Essai de Clarification", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 48 (2003), 1-28.

²⁰ J. Reynolds and R.F. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek inscriptions with commentary* (Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, Supplement 12, Cambridge 1987), 28-38. The term *patella* is compared with the Hebrew *tamhui* – lit. a charity plate, the rabbinic institution of daily food charity for the needy (cf. MPEah 8.7-9). See I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich. 1996), 70-80.

text not unlike the later rabbinic *birkat hamazon* – the grace pronounced after a meal – again suggesting a possible association between the synagogue and dining.²¹

Other literary evidence may be added to this portfolio. In the third century, Origen cautions Christians not to partake of meals in both church and synagogue, simultaneously attesting to the phenomenon of communal meals held in the synagogue and, perhaps, imputing some cultic significance to these meals.²² In a similar Christian polemical vein, John Chrysostom's mention of synagogues with their 'table of demons' in fourth-century Antioch would seem to be a reference to synagogue banquets of some form.²³

Most significant of all, perhaps, coming as they do from within the rabbinic tradition itself, are anecdotes related in the Palestinian Talmud concerning festive meals held by *haburot mitsvot* – religious associations – or the community at large, on synagogue premises.²⁴ In a fashion characteristic of rabbinic hermeneutical strategies, these episodes are put to service as illustrations of legal principles, which have little to do with the actualities of the events that they detail. Nevertheless, the fact that communal meals are described as occurring in the context of the synagogue, without attracting any particular comment, would tend to suggest that, however opposed to such activities the rabbis may have been, such activities took place regardless.

A question that needs to be addressed – relevant to all of the above evidence and the corresponding rabbinic prohibition on synagogue dining – is whether or not the point at issue might be the practice of dining in specific areas of the synagogue. Thus it might be that the ban on eating and drinking in the synagogue was directed specifically at such activities taking place in say, a prayer hall, rather than in ancillary facilities intended for such activities, similar to those found, as we have observed, in a number of synagogue complexes. However, there is no such specificity in the rabbinic statement. The forbiddance applies to the synagogue, without qualification. Furthermore, it is not clear that such gradations of sanctity within synagogue spaces were ever a feature of the institution prior to the sixth

²¹ C.H. Kraeling, *The Excavations at Dura Europos*, VIII, part I: *The Synagogue* (New Haven 1956), 259. The parchment was discovered in street-fill outside the synagogue proper, so the connection between that building and the document, whilst likely, is not certain.

²² *Select. Exod.* 12, 46.

²³ *Adv. Iud. Hom.* 1 (PG 48,854).

²⁴ E.g. YSanhedrin 8, 2, 26a-b; YMo'ed Qatan 2, 3, 81b; YBerakhot 2, 5d; YNazir 7, 1, 56a. See A. Oppenheimer, "Benevolent Societies in Jerusalem at the end of the Second Temple Period", in Z.J. Kapera (ed.), *Intertestamental Essays in Honour of Józef T Milik* (Krakow 1992), 149-165; J. Neusner, "Fellowship through Law: The Ancient Havurah", in J. Neusner (ed.), *Contemporary Judaic Fellowship in Theory and Practice* (New York 1972), 13-30; S.J. Spiro, "Who was the Haver? A New Approach to an Ancient Institution", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 11 (1980), 186-216.

century CE.²⁵ Albeit they are Christian and polemically motivated, the statements of Origen and Chrysostom imply no awareness of a distinction to be drawn between anything like a prayer hall and a dining room in the synagogue. Philo's Therapeutae appear both to partake of their Pentecostal meal and to conduct worship in the one specially designated space.²⁶ Furthermore, if the Tannaic anecdote about searching the synagogue carefully for any trace of leaven before the onset of Passover is reliable, then not only is this an indication that meals were consumed in the synagogue, but also that there was no distinction drawn about where within the synagogue meals might, or might not, be eaten – it was necessary for the synagogue as a whole to be scrutinised.²⁷

We may thus see that, cumulatively, a reasonable body of evidence exists to suggest the existence of a tradition of communal dining in the synagogue for various purposes throughout the eastern Mediterranean world, extending from the late Second Temple period into at least the fourth century of the common era, if not later. We may ask, then, how this tradition of communal synagogue meals may be reconciled with the statement of the Tosefta that eating and drinking in the synagogue is prohibited?

First we may state that, despite the notorious difficulty in dating the documents of the classical rabbinic tradition, it would appear that a substantial portion of the redaction of the Tosefta most probably took place sometime between 200 and 300 CE. In addition, there are indications that some of the earliest materials in the Tosefta are earlier than the latest strata of the Mishnah, redacted at the end of the second century CE.²⁸ Thus, whilst precise dating of the tradition recorded in

²⁵ The appearance of the *soreg* or chancel screen is an important indicator of such developments. See J. Branham, "Vicarious Sacrality: Temple Space in Ancient Synagogues", in D. Urman and P.V.M. Flesher (eds), *Ancient Synagogues. Historical analysis and archaeological discovery* (Leiden 1995), vol. 2, 332-335. It is in the period of the sixth century that we begin to see a growing institutionalisation and professionalisation of liturgical practice in some Palestinian synagogues, as exemplified by the liturgical use of the *piyyut*. The appearance of gradations of spatial sanctity in the synagogue appears to form a part of this larger phenomenon. Prior to this period, Palestinian synagogues were distinguished by their very lack of differentiated internal space, an unusual feature when compared with classical and near-eastern temples (including the Jerusalem Temple) where clergy and congregation occupied clearly differentiated spaces. This absence of clearly differentiated spatial zones appears to be shared only by a few other institutions of worship, including Mithraea and some early Christian churches. See S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton and London 2001), 263-267.

²⁶ *Contemplat.* 66-89.

²⁷ YPesahim 1,1,27b

²⁸ According to tradition (e.g. *Iggeret Rav Sherira' Ga'on*), the compilation of the Tosefta is said to have been begun by Rabbi Nehemiah (second century CE) and to have been completed by Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Hosha'yah in the third century CE. However, the redaction history of the Tosefta is clearly far more complex than this and the character of Tosefta's redaction is uneven. Nevertheless, that it is of primarily Palestinian origin and contains much early material may be assumed. On the history of the Tosefta see J.N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot le-sifrut ha-Tana'im*

TMegillah 2.18 is not possible, it is highly probable that the prohibition on eating and drinking in synagogues is contemporaneous with evidence attesting the actuality of such activities.

We might first ask ourselves why the rabbis might have issued a ban on eating and drinking in the synagogue?

As framed in the Tosefta, the prohibition on eating and drinking in the synagogue forms but part of a legal ruling which restricts permissible activities in the synagogue primarily to reading and exegesis of Scripture and the study of rabbinic law. The use of the synagogue is thus reserved for those activities which are considered central to rabbinic piety.²⁹ Although the activities forbidden in this passage are characterised as frivolities, it is possible that they may have embodied forms of piety – or at least been construed by the rabbis as embodying forms of piety – at odds with rabbinic teaching. The prohibition on eating and drinking in the synagogue may be targeted at explicitly cultic meals. We have already mentioned Origen's suggestive comment implying a possible cultic significance to synagogue meals. Symposiarchal meals formed a central activity of pagan religious associations and it is possible the rabbis equated synagogue meals with such pagan cultic repasts.³⁰ Similarly, cultic meals in the form of funerary banquets were celebrated by pagans, Christians and Jews alike in late antiquity.³¹ It may be that the rabbis wished to ban a cultic activity associated with other religious groups from the synagogue.³² Is this why the uttering of public eulogies in the synagogue, a funerary rite, is a specifically approved activity?

Whatever the reasons for the rabbinic prohibition on dining in the synagogue, what is eminently clear is that communal synagogue meals were conducted regardless. This observation has far-reaching implications. Traditionally, the synagogue has been characterised as the rabbinic institution *par excellence*. The rabbis – and their assumed pharisaic forbears – were presumed to have an overwhelming interest in this institution and to have dominated it, and its

(Jerusalem 1957); A. Goldberg, "The Tosefta: Companion to the Mishna", in S. Safrai (ed.), *The Literature of the Sages* (Assen and Philadelphia 1987), part 1, 283-302; J. Neusner, *The Tosefta: An introduction* (Atlanta 1992).

²⁹ But we may note the absence of prayer from this list.

³⁰ On symposiarchal meals and cultic associations see Harland, *Associations*, 55-87.

³¹ Jews: Fine, *This Holy Place*, 158; YBerakhot 3,1,6a; Pagans and Christians: R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven and London 1997), 109-112.

³² Already in Philo we encounter disapproval of public banquets connected with associations and it is possible that he may also have communal meals associated with the synagogue in mind. Philo is particularly critical of the excessive indulgence in wine and food which characterised the meals of the associations. He contrasts this with the sobriety of the Jewish 'feasts' (which, like the celebration of the Day of Atonement, are in fact fasts). See *Ebr.* 20-26.

traditions, from a very early period.³³ This consensus has now largely collapsed for the late Second Temple period in the wake of works like E.P. Sanders' *Judaism: Practice and Belief. 63 BCE-66CE*.³⁴ However, it is still widely assumed that in the post-destruction era, from the second century onwards, the self-representation of the rabbis in the core documents of the classical rabbinic corpus is an accurate picture of the circumstances of this period – that the rabbis, the Torah scholars without rival, were universally acknowledged as the leaders of Jewish society throughout both Palestine and the Diaspora and that the synagogue, the central institution of the Jewish community, was a wholly rabbinic establishment whose liturgy and ritual was conducted entirely in accordance with rabbinic law.³⁵

The evidence upon which this reconstruction of Judaism in the post-destruction era is founded has recently been subjected to a radical reinterpretation. Seth Schwartz in his *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* has argued – in the context of an overarching thesis that any attempt to make sense of the various remains of ancient Judaism must consider the effects of shifting types of imperial domination – that the rabbis remained a small, peripheral movement in Palestine until the fifth or sixth century CE, not becoming an essential component of Palestinian Jewish society until the early Middle Ages.³⁶

Without entering here into the details of Schwartz's argument, it may be noted that much of the attractiveness of Schwartz's thesis derives from the fact that it is able to provide at least a partial explanation of why what we know of the material culture of Palestine from the second through fifth centuries CE is so frequently at odds with what the rabbinic tradition might have led us to expect to find. Of particular significance in this regard is the presence of rich decorative schemes, abundant with figural art, in the synagogues of late antique Palestine. Indeed, every Jewish synagogue of this period which has thus far come to light, where its remains are sufficiently preserved, evidences more or less elaborate decoration, whether primarily on its façade or within. This Jewish representational art has long discomfited scholars. Not only does it appear to be in direct violation of the second commandment, but also many of the recurring motifs, such as the wheel of the zodiac, often with the god Helios depicted at the axis, are possessed of overt pagan religious associations. The response of the majority of scholarship on this art –

³³ E.g. S. Safrai, "The Synagogue", in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds), *The Jewish People in the First Century*, II (Philadelphia 1976); J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into economic and social conditions during the New Testament* (Philadelphia 1969).

³⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief. 63 BCE-66CE* (London and Philadelphia 1992).

³⁵ E.g. G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age* (Cambridge, Mass. 1989); L. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton 1993); Fine, *This Holy Place*; A. Oppenheimer, *The 'Am-Ha-aretz: A study in the social history of the Jewish people in the Hellenistic Roman period* (Leiden 1977); E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their concepts and beliefs*, 2 vols (Jerusalem 1979).

³⁶ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*.

particularly Israeli scholarship – has been to construe such art as ‘merely’ decorative: that is, to void it of any particular meaning, claiming that, often, Jews were unaware of the implications of the images they employed and, further, that by the second and third centuries, classical paganism was at such a nadir that many of the images concerned were largely free of any particular religious content.³⁷ But the speciousness of such a reading of this synagogue art is clearly demonstrated by the fact that art with recognisable Jewish or biblical themes – even when found in the same context as pagan images, for example, on adjacent panels of a floor mosaic – is considered to be profoundly meaningful. So, as we move from one image to the next in a single programmatic context, the images are deemed either to possess meaning or to be mere ornament, depending on whether they are Jewish or pagan in origin!

Interestingly enough, this modern interpretation of synagogue art as ‘merely decorative’ in character actually mirrors a rabbinic response to the problem of living in urban environments filled with figural art.³⁸ The rabbis’ response was to construe pagan religiosity as consisting exclusively of cultic acts directed at fetishes, thus in theory rendering images empty of any particular inherent religious significance.

This accommodation on the part of the rabbis to circumstances outside of their control has implications for understanding the synagogue art of late antique Palestine. Schwartz argues that the complex decorative schemes of the monumental Palestinian synagogues known from the second to fifth centuries seem to embody a different notion of sanctity from that evident in rabbinic texts. Schwartz argues that the ‘otherness’ of these synagogues is overdetermined. It is marked, not only by the monumentality of the architectural structure itself, but invariably in other ways as well, in particular by iconographic indications of sanctity, either on the façade or in the interior.³⁹ Whereas the rabbis regarded the synagogue as primarily a place of Torah, whose sanctity derived from the physical presence of the Torah scroll, the decorative schemes of the Palestinian synagogues, with their zodiacal and Temple imagery, seem to reflect a conception of the synagogue as an unearthly realm, a

³⁷ Here Michael Avi-Yonah and his students have been of tremendous influence. For examples of Avi-Yonah’s approach see M. Avi-Yonah, *Art in Ancient Palestine* (Jerusalem 1981). The many attempts to ‘Judaize’ the representations of the zodiac in late antique Palestinian synagogues are, here, instructive: e.g. R. Hachlili, “The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: Representation and Significance”, *Bulletin of the American Society for Oriental Studies* 228 (1979), 61-76; G. Foerster, “The Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and its Iconographic Sources”, *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985), 380-391; id., “The Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and its Place in Jewish Thought and Literature”, *Eretz Israel* 19 (1987), 225-234. See also many of the essays in L. Levine and Z. Weiss (eds), *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish art and society in Late Antiquity* (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 40, Portsmouth RI 2000).

³⁸ Cf. M. Avodah Zarah 1.7. See Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 169-174.

³⁹ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 247.

reflection of the heavenly Temple and an inherently sacred space, in and of itself.⁴⁰ As an adjunct to this, the community that built and maintained this realm appears to have conceived of itself as a holy congregation and an Israel in miniature.⁴¹ In this regard, we may note the inscriptions which appear at this time in many of the Palestinian synagogues which make specific mention of this “holy place” or the “holy congregation”.⁴²

It is, we would suggest, in the social context suggested by this archaeological evidence that we must construe the phenomenon of communal meals in the late antique synagogue. We have clear evidence that such meals took place. There is evidence suggesting that such meals may have been possessed of a cultic dimension of some sort. This is entirely compatible with a conception of the synagogue, not primarily as a school of Torah, but as an inherently sacred realm wherein the Heavenly Temple was immanent. Indeed, one might speculate on the possibility that communal meals assumed sacrificial resonances in such a context. Further, the role of commensality in the expression of community identity and solidarity would seem to be of importance here. The notion that the community was a holy congregation, a source of sanctity in itself, serves to imbue the community and the community’s self-identification with a significance which found expression in the ritual of communal dining.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of communal synagogue meals is revealed, then, to be an important piece of evidence supporting the contention that, prior to the sixth and seventh centuries CE, the rabbis remained a largely peripheral influence in Jewish society, certainly in Palestine and probably elsewhere as well.⁴³ Their influence on,

⁴⁰ For images of the art present in these synagogues see R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden 1988).

⁴¹ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 259. Schwartz argues that there is no clear evidence for the universal centrality of Torah reading in the synagogue, though this phenomenon clearly becomes more and more important as we approach the sixth century. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 241-243.

⁴² Fine, *This Holy Place*, 97-105, is a convenient gathering together of the sources, but Fine’s interpretations, rabbinising as they are, should be treated with caution.

⁴³ It is worthy of note that the tradition in TMegillah 2.18 outlining appropriate rabbinical synagogue piety is absent from the Mishnah, but appears in the later Tosefta and is reiterated by both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. It might be asked whether this apparent chronological development is of significance. In this regard, it may be observed that the synagogue is an institution quite peripheral to the interests of the Mishnah, whose overwhelming concern is with the (destroyed) Temple. The appearance in Tosefta of the tradition in TMegillah 2.18 may reflect a growing interest by the rabbinical movement in the institution of the synagogue – an interest which did not necessarily exist in the Mishnaic period – as well as reflecting their, as yet, limited influence on many of the communities who gathered in these synagogues and who conducted their affairs there in the fashion in which they had always done.

and interest in, the institution of the synagogue was, during this period, qualified at best, beginning to grow in extent, as Schwartz contends, only during the sixth century. That a rabbinic ban on dining in the late antique synagogue should appear to have been ineffectual should not, thus, cause us surprise. The rabbis were apparently not in a position to enforce their will in an institution which, for its early history at least, was largely beyond their influence.

Susan Weingarten

Children's Foods in the Talmudic Literature

This paper looks at foods that were seen as specifically associated with children, from birth to puberty, in the Jewish Talmudic sources.¹

A brief explanation of the nature of these sources may be in place here. Apart from the religious laws found written in the Bible, Jewish tradition had further laws, originally preserved orally but eventually written down in a collection called the Mishnah, which was finally edited around the turn of the second and third centuries of our era. To site it in the world of food, the Mishnah received its final form in Palestine at the same time as Athenaeus was writing his *Philosophers at Dinner* in Egypt. The laws found in the Mishnah cover many aspects of everyday life. However, they are written very concisely and in Hebrew, whereas the everyday language of Jews in the Roman and Persian Empires was Aramaic (or Greek). So further explanation was needed, and a further body of legal and moral discussion and commentary on the Mishnah grew up and was eventually written down by rabbis in both Palestine and Babylonia around the fourth and seventh centuries respectively, to become the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds. In Palestine there was also another legal compilation called the Tosefta, and legal and moral commentaries on different books of the Bible called Midrashim.

Since not everyone could understand the original Hebrew, and since terminology changed over the generations, the Talmudic literature often included translations of terms. Since the rabbis did not always agree with each other, the discussions they had were also recorded. Many of these discussions are related to food. Talmudic literature was written in the same world as Graeco-Roman or Persian literature, but it differs from this in one important respect. The other literature was written by aristocrats for other aristocrats – no-one else could read or write. Thus they were not interested in how food was prepared – this was the province of women and slaves – only in the finished products, and in luxury products in particular. Talmudic rabbis, on the other hand, were often very poor men themselves, and they were interested in every aspect of daily life in order to bring it under religious control. So from them we can learn about the everyday food of ordinary people.

¹ I am grateful to Dr Michele Klein and Dr Yuval Shahar who read this paper and made helpful comments. A preliminary version of some parts of this paper was presented at the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery in September 2003 and will be published in the forthcoming Symposium Proceedings.

Among the many references to food in the Talmudic sources, only a small proportion deal with food specifically associated with children. Presumably children mostly ate the same food as adults. However, there are a number of exceptions, which will be the subject of this paper.

Babies were, of course, breast-fed. Mishnah Qetubot, which deals with marriage contracts, lays breast-feeding down as one of the duties a woman owes to her husband:

These are the works which the wife must perform for her husband: grinding flour and baking bread and washing clothes and cooking food and nursing her child and making his bed and working in wool. If she brought him one maid she need not grind or bake or wash; if two she need not cook or nurse her baby... (MQetubot 5.5)

This list begins with the basic tasks necessary for survival, grinding the flour and baking the bread that formed the basis of the diet. Washing clothes and cooking are added as secondary tasks and then the Mishnah makes it clear that the woman's responsibility for food in the home includes nursing her own child. However, while this was the expected behaviour, it is also clear from this source that wet-nurses were also used by those who could afford it. The Greek physician Soranus in the second century CE actually prefers the milk of wet nurses to that of mothers, who may be agitated, dehydrated or even feverish after delivery (*Gyn.* 2. 18). However, the rabbis were aware that not all children thrived with wet-nurses. In Avot de Rabbi Natan (A) 31,1 (Schechter 30 [90] end) we find the following:

Rabbi Ahai ben Josiah said: He who buys grain in the market is like an infant whose mother has died and who is taken from one wet nurse to another but is never satisfied... But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother's breast.

Rabbi Ahai, a second-century rabbi from Babylonia, is talking here of people who were not able to use the produce of their own land, because the natural order of things has been upset, and he uses breast-feeding by a mother or a wet-nurse as a comparison. A wet-nurse is clearly inferior in his view. In this he is like the Greek physician Damastes, who thought the mother must feed her baby immediately after the birth because this was the natural order of things.² If neither mother nor wet-

² Damastes is cited by Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.17. See on this P.Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge 1998), 253-271. It may also be instructive to compare R. Ahai's discussion with the philosopher Favorinus' attitudes to breast-feeding mothers as quoted by Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 12.1, which has been described as "conservative reaction against women's wish to rebel against biologically determined roles". M.R.Lefkowitz and M.B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A source book in translation* (London 1982), 188; S.

nurse was available, we learn from both Palestinian and Babylonian sources that a baby could be fed using a *shofar*, a ram's horn, and it was even permitted to break the Sabbath restrictions to do this.³ Horns were used for artificial infant feeding in other cultures too – ceramic horns have been found in ancient Egypt.⁴ The Talmudic sources dealing with this describe the horn as belonging to the community, so the implication may be that the community took responsibility for an orphan or baby whose parents were unable to look after it.

The Babylonian Talmud (BT) also gives instructions in another place for the diet of the nursing mother, on the presumption that it would affect her milk. Some foods were thought to suppress milk, and others to curdle it (BTQetubot 60a-b). Thus she was not to eat dodder,⁵ lichen, small fishes, earth, gourds, apples, palm hearts,⁶ the inflorescence of palms,⁷ *kamkha* (sour milk sauce),⁸ or fish hash.⁹ The translation of some of these terms is uncertain, but it is clear that at least some of these were recognised as dubious food – another source has to state that palm-hearts *can* be used for food. It is also probable that the list may be less a function of observation of what actually affected milk than of magical beliefs: perhaps eating a sauce of sour milk would make a woman's own milk sour.¹⁰ This list is in fact followed in the text by similar sorts of prescriptions for the diet of pregnant women that are obviously related to sympathetic magic: e.g. (BTQetubot 60b) a woman who eats fish brine '*moninei*' will have children with blinking eyes, while one who

Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Wives, Whores and Slaves: Women in classical antiquity* (New York 1975), 166.

³ Tosephta Shabbat 13.16; BTShabbat 35b

⁴ V. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A history of infant feeding* (Edinburgh 1986), 10-11 and pl. 1.2c. Fildes points out that animal horns were probably used throughout history for infant feeding, and she provides illustrations from different times and places, e.g. pl. 1.22: thirteenth-century France; pl. 13.1: B. Daddi, fourteenth-cent.; Breughel, 1563. The Greek god Zeus was famously fed by a nanny-goat, Amaltheia. She appears iconographically as a goat sometimes with the infant suckling from her udders, like Romulus and Remus from their she-wolf (e.g. on a coin of Aegium in Achaia from the second century CE), but also a nymph with babe on one arm and horn (in this case a cornucopia) on the other (e.g. on a coin of Aigai in Cilicia from the second century CE). See *LIMC* s.v. Amaltheia (Henig) which also records a relief of Amaltheia as a nymph feeding the infant Zeus from a large cornucopia. It seems clear that there was an association here with goat horns as feeding-vessels for babies.

⁵ Dodder = *cuscuta*, a bitter yellow parasitic plant used in brewing beer, q.v. M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Ramat Gan, Baltimore and London 2002), s.v.

⁶ Palm heart = *qora*, the terminal bud ('heart') of the palm, q.v. Sokoloff, *Dictionary*, s.v. Cf. BTBerakhot 32a: 'the terminal bud is a food'.

⁷ Inflorescence of palms = *kufra*, q.v. Sokoloff, *Dictionary*.

⁸ Sour milk sauce = *kamkha*, q.v. Sokoloff, *Dictionary* s.v., and s.v. *kutah*, *kutha*. Cf. BTGittin 69b, which talks of barley cakes eaten with *kamkha* that was not more than forty days old.

⁹ Fish hash = *harsana*. Cf. BTKeritot 6a: it is better to eat putrid fish hash than sour milk sauce...

¹⁰ For a useful discussion of sympathetic magic among other theories of magic see J. Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory: A philosophical study of theories of religion in social anthropology* (Cambridge 1976), 125-159.

eats citron will have sweet-smelling children. Elsewhere both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds quote Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (third-century Palestine) saying that wine was considered good for nursing mothers, so that a man who separated from his wife while she was breast-feeding had to give her wine as part of her food-allowance (JTQetubot v 11, 30b; BTQetubot 65b).

Both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds quote the rabbis teaching that a child should be breast-fed for twenty-four months. They disagreed about whether it could be prolonged any longer: although one rabbi says it can go on for four or five years, another considers this ‘an abominable thing’.¹¹ The rabbis thought that pregnancy would adversely affect a mother’s milk, so a woman who was widowed and breast-feeding was not allowed to remarry for two years, the duration of breast-feeding. This is discussed in the Babylonian Talmud (BTYebamot 42b) which rules that a woman is not to remarry if pregnant, or breast-feeding. If she were to get pregnant while breast-feeding, her milk might curdle and the child of her first husband could die.¹² So why, the rabbis then ask, is a woman breast-feeding her husband’s child allowed to take the risk of getting pregnant? The answer here is that, if such a woman did have to give up breast-feeding because of pregnancy, she would give her child eggs and milk. So why should this not be the case for the child of her first husband?, asks the Talmud. The explanation follows: perhaps her second husband wouldn’t want to pay for the eggs and milk for another man’s baby, and the baby would die. Unfortunately we do not know whether the eggs and milk were given raw, or whether they were cooked to make some sort of a custard. Soranus (*Gyn* 2.18) also suggests giving “an egg that can be sipped” as a weaning food.

Another Babylonian source (BTYoma 78b) has a rabbi citing his mother on the subject of the needs of children: a baby needs oil and warm water; when it has grown a little, it needs egg in *kutah*; and when it has grown even more it needs to smash pottery! Presumably the oil and warm water was for external application,¹³ but it is less clear whether the egg and *kutah* were for external application or for eating.¹⁴ *Kutah* was clearly very similar to the sour milk sauce *kamah* we have mentioned above; it is sometimes confused with it in the texts. We know it was

¹¹ BTQetubot 60a, quoting the Palestinian rabbis, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua. 18 months: Mishnah Gittin 7.6.

¹² This was a general belief in antiquity, mentioned by Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 587b. Cf. Soranus, *Gyn*. 2.19, recommending that wet-nurses should not have sex. Contracts for wet-nursing from Roman Egypt also stipulate that the nurse should not have sex or get pregnant: q.v. CPJ 146 (BGU 4.1106), a Jewish wet-nurse’s contract (13 BCE), and cf. Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life*, 381, citing this and a further wet-nurse’s contract from 13 BCE (BGU 4.1107G).

¹³ Cf. Soranus, *Gyn*. 2.31-32.

¹⁴ Sokoloff, *Dictionary*, s.v. *kutah*, thinks it was a child’s food; the Soncino translation of BTYoma 78b thinks it was for external application. Dr Michele Klein has suggested to me that oil and water might calm a hungry baby, the eggs and *kutah* might fill a hungry four year old, while a hungry older child might smash pottery storage jars to get some food!

made of salt, sour milk and mouldy barley bread or flour (BTPesahim 43a) and was specifically a Babylonian food: the Palestinian Mishnah calls it 'Babylonian *kutah*'. Indeed a famous Palestinian rabbi said the only thing to do with Babylonian *kutah* was to spit it out! (BTShabbat 145b). Not all Babylonians liked it, however: some sources say even putrid fish was preferable to *kutah* (BTHorayot 12a; Keritot 6a). It was generally used as a dip for bread. Later, in eleventh-century Baghdad, the Arab doctor Ibn Jazla writes that *fūdhaj*, rotted barley, was used externally against itching, together with wine vinegar and rose oil.¹⁵ So it is indeed unclear as to whether what must have been a very pungent relish would have been eaten with egg by quite young children in Talmudic times.

Children and adults were allowed to suck milk straight from the teats of an animal, if this was considered necessary on health grounds. The Talmudic sources do not say what illnesses this was supposed to cure (in adults it was for chest pain: BTQetubot 60a) but it is interesting to note that it is still traditional practice among Jews from Yemen in present-day Israel to put a child to suck from the udders of a goat to cure mouth ulcers.

Other food considered suitable for babies was honey. In a description of the taste of the manna, the miraculous food which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, the Palestinian Rabbi Jose bar Hanina (third century) is quoted by the BT as saying that the manna tasted of bread for young men, oil for the aged and honey for the babies (BTYoma 75b). However there is a different Palestinian source which talks of the manna tasting of honey to the old and of oil to the babies! (Midrash Shemot Rabbah 25.3).¹⁶ Perhaps one of these sources simply got things mixed up, or perhaps babies were given both honey and oil at times. In exegesis of the biblical verse from Deuteronomy 32:13, "He made him [sc. Israel] suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock", some midrashim explain this, saying the Israelite babies thrown in the Nile by the Egyptians were miraculously nourished by God himself, sucking honey (sometimes with milk PdeRE 42) from the rock and being anointed with oil from another rock (Targum Neofiti, Targum Yerushalmi to Exodus 15:2). There is another source which has babies miraculously provided with honey and oil to suck from skin-bottles, during the crossing of the Red Sea (AdeRN 33). Milk was of course associated with honey in the biblical descriptions of the land of Israel in a number of texts (Exod 3:8 etc) and the *Torah* (Law) is also compared to milk and honey (Midrash Canticles Rabbah 1.2, 3) which could be one reason for suggesting honey as baby-food. And we should always remember that these are sources dealing with miracles, rather

¹⁵ Ibn Jazla: *Minhāj al-Bayān*, quoted by C. Perry, "What Ibn Jazla says you should eat", *Paper presented at the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2003: Nurture* (Oxford September, 2003).

¹⁶ For the manna tasting like breast-milk, which is supposed to include every taste for the baby, see BTYoma 75a and parallels.

than reality. But the Greek physician Soranus (*Gyn.* 2.17) does talk about giving infants honey alone or with goats' milk on the first few days of life, before their mothers' milk comes in, so perhaps Jewish babies were also given honey at times, and maybe oil as well. In the Middle Ages, a Jewish child learning to read would have letters written on his slate in honey, so he could lick them off and experience the words of the scriptures "as sweet as honey".¹⁷

Mothers are also shown as making a sort of 'hasty bread' (*harara*) for their children. This sort of bread appears both in Palestinian and Babylonian sources. It was baked over coals (Mishnah Shabbat 1.10) or sometimes even buried in coals and removed with a pointed stick (Tosefta Shabbat 16.10). It was made with dough that was not kneaded (Mekhilta deRabbiYishma'el Pascha Bo 14). Naturally this method of baking made a hard crust (BTShabbat 19b). It was the food of the poor – there is an account of one poor man stealing *harara* from another when the first goes to turn it over on the coals (BTQiddushin 59a). During baking, a pocket of air formed which swelled up until punctured by the stick with which it was removed, rather like modern *pitta* bread (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 1.3). This very simple bread then, which did not need kneading, and where there was no waiting for it to rise, and which did not need a real oven for baking could be made quickly and relatively cheaply – this is what the children of Israel are said in the Bible to have taken with them out of Egypt when they left in a hurry. In the Jerusalem Talmud a mother is said to be able to change her mind while making dough for baking and kneading, and instead uses it to make *harara* for her son (JT Hallah 1,4) – something she could make quickly in response to his demands.

The same passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, which talks of the mother making *harara*, also mentions *qenobqa'ot*, apparently referring to a dry dough product that could easily be crumbled. In the Leiden ms. of the Jerusalem Talmud, *qenobqa'ot* are explained as meaning *qrimbites* or *buqarlata*. These words clearly come from Greek and Latin – *qrimbites* from the Greek *kribanos* or *klibanos*. A *klibanos* refers to a sort of mini-oven (*testa* in Latin) made of metal or ceramic, where a tight-fitting domed cover was placed over a flat dish. The dough to be cooked was placed inside and the whole thing was covered in hot coals for baking, instead of the coals being just below. In this way very high temperatures could be reached and the baking would be even on all sides.¹⁸ *Buqarlata* clearly comes from the Latin *buccelatum*, which was a sort of bread which was dried or re-baked a second time, producing literally a biscuit (*bis cuit*) or toast. This *bucellatum* was what the Roman army took with them on campaign, being light and not liable to spoil. Being dry it was easy to crumble, and in fact it is found in a Roman recipe from the

¹⁷ Mahzor Vitry, quoted in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. honey.

¹⁸ A. Cubberly, "Bread-baking in ancient Italy: *Clibanos* and *sub testu* in the Roman world: further thoughts", in J. Wilkens, D. Harvey and M. Dobson (eds), *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter 1995), 55-68, with further bibliography.

collection attributed to Apicius (7.6, 4 and cf. 7.10; 7.13, 3), soaked in spiced wine for thickening a white sauce made of pounded pepper, fish sauce, wine, rue, onion, pine-kernels and oil. The mediaeval commentators Rashi and the Rosh on this passage in the Jerusalem Talmud further explain *qenobqa'ot* as food that was crumbled, and then moistened and used for baby food. These commentators could have been referring to practices of their own days rather than Talmudic times, but it is interesting that Soranus (*Gyn.* 2.46) in the second century CE also talks of crumbled bread being moistened with milk, honey or wine and used as weaning food for babies.

One source in the Babylonian Talmud (BTQetubot 59b) quotes Rabbi Hiyya, a second-century rabbi who lived in both Palestine and Babylonia, as saying that someone who wants his daughter to be fair-skinned, should feed her close to puberty on young birds and milk. It is clear that a fair skin was considered desirable by the rabbis of Talmudic Babylonia, and a black skin was not: among the warnings of food to be avoided in pregnancy (BTQetubot 60b) we saw above was the alcoholic drink *shikhra*, which was thought to produce black-skinned children.¹⁹ As we saw, this list is full of magical thinking about the effects of foods, and this would seem to be the case here too. Milk is white, as is the meat of young birds, so they should produce a white-skinned girl.²⁰ However, we can probably also be able to deduce from this that Rabbi Hiyya realised the importance of a good diet for pubescent girls, if they were to grow into healthy and marriageable young women.

But apart from these rather sporadic references, there is quite a lot of evidence that there was one sort of food that was regarded as being particularly children's food: nuts – *egoz*, pl. *egozim*. *Egozim* can mean nuts in general, or the word can refer specifically to walnuts. Other nuts mentioned in Talmudic sources are almonds and a sort of pistachio – but apart from one case discussed below none of these seem to be connected with children in particular. Perhaps children, particularly in poorer homes, were not able to be fussy, and just took whatever nuts they could get, or if the reference is to walnuts, this could mean that these were the commonest nuts available. Nuts are, of course, extremely good concentrated sources of both fats and proteins, and some nut-trees, such as the terebinth, a variety of pistachio, and the almond have grown in the Middle East at least since biblical times.²¹ The *egoz*-tree is mentioned in the biblical Song of Songs, and the rabbis of the Talmud commented on this book, each rabbi giving a different

¹⁹ *Shahor*, 'black', is similar to *shikhra* in Hebrew.

²⁰ The eleventh century Baghdad doctor Ibn Jazla also uses Perry, Ibn Jazla.

²¹ Remains of two varieties of *pistacia* nuts and wild almonds have been found on a mid-Pleistocene site in Israel together with acorns and what looks like evidence of nut-cracking: N. Goren-Inbar, G. Sharon, Y. Melamed and M. Kislev, "Nuts, nut cracking and pitted stones at Geshar Benot Ya'aqov, Israel", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 99/4 (2002), 2455-2460.

interpretation.²² Thus Rabbi Berekhiah, a third-century rabbi from Palestine, writes that *egozim* have four quarters and a vacant space in the centre, which certainly sounds like walnuts. However, elsewhere in the same passage another anonymous rabbi talks of *egozim* as being soft, medium and hard. This sounds more as if he is talking about nuts in general, rather than walnuts, which are not exactly soft. (There is another rabbi who notes that nuts cannot escape custom duty, being betrayed by their rattling!) Since it is difficult to decide what is being referred to in any one case, we shall just refer to them as nuts.

Of course it was not only children who ate nuts – adults ate them as well, and this is reflected in the Talmudic sources. There are a few references to the use of nuts in prepared dishes of food – one of these talks of adding nuts to honey with sesame seeds. This may be done for a sick person on the Sabbath, provided they do not reduce it to a pulp, according to the Tosefta (Shabbat 12.14). However, the Babylonian Talmud writes that nuts on their own are considered to be bad for a sick person (BTAvodah Zara 29a) – they are supposed to send him straight back to his illness (together with a long list of other things which are said to do the same, including fat meat, roast eggs, shaving, bathing, cheese and liver). So either these Babylonian rabbis disagreed with their Palestinian predecessors, or it was just unalloyed nuts that were considered to be bad, not nuts mixed up with sesame and honey. Excess of nuts, like excess of eggs, was certainly bad – eating forty of either of them would give you a heart attack! (Masekhet Kallah 1.13). An eleventh-century rabbi interprets the Talmudic food *kisnin* or *kisanin* as pockets of dough filled with sugar, nuts and almonds, but the presence of sugar here would seem to imply that he is interpreting this food in terms of his own day, not the time of the Talmud.²³ The Jerusalem Talmud discusses whether flavouring unleavened bread eaten on Passover and disguising the original taste is allowed. It lists several possible flavourings, including liquids and sesame seeds – and it also mentions nuts.²⁴ However, as often in Talmudic discussions, it is unclear whether people actually baked their unleavened bread with nuts or whether this is merely a theoretical possibility. I could find no other evidence of nuts in prepared dishes. There are rather more references to the use of nuts by themselves as a last course – what the Greeks called *trokta*; things nibbled after the main course of the meal. Here nuts appear accompanied by parched corn and dates and even sometimes mushrooms and pigeons in what must have been a rare feast for a rich rabbi.

²² Songs Rabbah 6.1, 11.

²³ A. Kohut (ed.), *Aruch Completum* (New York 1955). This is a modern edition of an eleventh-century dictionary written in Rome. The entry for *kisan/kisnin* (BTBerakhot 41b etc) cites Rabbenu Hannanel (d. 1055) of Kairouan in present-day Tunisia, who interprets this food as pockets filled with sugar and nuts. Among the alternatives for *kisnin* considered in the dictionary entry are cannabis seeds.

²⁴ JTPesahim 29b.

The Seder meal eaten on the eve of the festival of Passover was a very special meal, “different from all other nights”, we are told. One of the differences was that food normally eaten was specifically *not* eaten on this night – unleavened bread was eaten instead of leavened bread, only bitter herbs were eaten instead of a variety of herbs and the usual dessert was not eaten. This is made clear by the Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 119b-120a which discusses the *afikoman*, the dessert, and makes it clear what is *not* to be eaten after the Passover meal:

Shemuel said: mushrooms for myself and pigeons for Abba; R. Hanina ben Shila and R. Johanan said: [things like] dates, parched ears of corn and nuts. It was taught following R. Johanan: you must not conclude after the Passover meal with things like dates, parched ears and nuts.

The rabbis here start by talking about the foods usual for the last course eaten after the main course. Shemuel liked to eat mushrooms and Abba, who must have been a rich rabbi, liked pigeons. We know from Athenaeus that it was usual in the Greek world to eat this sort of thing after the main course, together with little cakes (*Deip.* 14). Rabbi Johanan makes it clear that ordinarily the sort of things eaten for the last course were nuts, dates and parched corn. So, having made it quite clear what was usually used to end a meal, the rabbis tells us that we must *not* eat *any* of these after the main course at the Passover meal, which was “different from all other nights”. The only ‘dessert’ allowed was a further special piece of unleavened bread. We shall come back to the Passover meal later, but now I want to continue to look at other uses of nuts, still with adults in mind.

Hospitality was very important in the world of the Talmud, and the Tosefta discusses whether someone is allowed to measure out food on the Sabbath, including nuts, dried corn and dates (Tos.Shabbat 17.7). The conclusion is that this is allowed, unlike other sorts of measuring:

A man may take out from [the store] he has in his house and measure out for his guests nuts, dates and parched corn even on the Sabbath, when other sorts of measuring are not allowed.

In Babylonia (BTSukkot 10a) nuts were also used as decorations on the harvest festival of Sukkot in the autumn, together with figured cloths which were hung up with almonds, peaches, pomegranates, bunches of grapes, wreaths of ears of corn and other decorations. Since almonds are referred to here separately from nuts (*egozim*), presumably *egozim* is being used here to mean walnuts.

Nuts are also referred to metaphorically – there are many fables and parables (for example Midrash Canticles Rabbah 6.11 we quoted before) where the Jewish people is compared to a nut, since even if it falls on the ground and is trampled in the dirt, the sweet kernel is preserved unharmed. And of course there are references

to nuts in various agricultural contexts, as well as references to nut oil, which was seen as inferior to olive oil for lighting (e.g. JTShabbat 2.4b, 2).

But apart from all these there are also a very large number of references to nuts and children, and it is clear that for the rabbis of the Talmud nuts were particularly associated with children. This association is clear from all the Talmudic literature, both in ancient Palestine and in Babylonia.

To begin with the Palestinian Mishnah, Bava Metzia chapter four deals with laws about fair trading practices, going into detail about what is and is not acceptable. The Mishnah writes: “R. Judah says: a shopkeeper may not distribute parched corn or nuts to children, for he accustoms them to come [only] to him. But the Sages permit it.”²⁵

It is clear that Rabbi Judah regards the bribe or free gift of nuts addressed particularly to children as unacceptable. But the sages disagree with him. We cannot know from this typically concise Mishnah just why the sages disagreed. However, because so many laws in the Mishnah are expressed in this very brief form, the rabbis would often add further comments to explain why, so we can look at the Talmud to explain our Mishnah, with the proviso that the rabbis may have been referring to their own time rather than to the time of the Mishnah. The Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 60a explains why the sages disagreed: there is no reason, they say, why, if one shopkeeper hands out nuts to children, his rival cannot hand out plums!

So perhaps the association of nuts with children is just accidental, as it might just as well be plums? Well, the Jerusalem Talmud Pesahim 10.37b 1, discusses the injunction of another Mishnah, “On a festival, a man is required to make his wife and children happy”. (This in itself is based on the biblical commandment: “You shall rejoice on your festival”.) The Mishnah continues, asking “With what does he make them happy? With wine. [But] Rabbi Judah says: ‘Women with what is appropriate for them and children with what is appropriate for them’.” In other words, the Mishnah is telling us that a man should take care that his family has something to rejoice about on the festival. He must give his wife and children what they want. And what *do* they want, or in the words of the Mishnah, what is appropriate for them? The Mishnah itself does not say, but the Jerusalem Talmud commenting on it explains it for us. Wives want shoes and doves, the Talmud explains, and the sort of things that please children are nuts (presumably walnuts here), almonds and parched corn.²⁶

²⁵ Mishnah Bava Metzia 4.12.

²⁶ All the main texts of the Talmud (P Schäfer, H-J Becker, *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, ii, 1-4 [Tübingen 2001], 174) here have *mesanin* (shoes), which makes good sense in the context. But perhaps it is a comment on what some commentators thought women should be entitled to that there have been attempts to alter this to *kesanin* (ears of corn) (Jastrow), or *besanin* (fine linen) (Bokser tr., citing Epstein, HaShiloah 4 [1925], 399-402, which I have not seen). At least ‘fine linen’ has some support from the parallel passage in the Babylonian Talmud.

Thus nuts were certainly seen as a treat that children particularly enjoyed – you could be sure that they would make them happy on a festival. In another source, nuts are specified as one of the things a particularly spoiled child wants: BTTa'anit 23a describes a spoiled child who

acts petulantly before his father, who gives him whatever he wants. Thus he says to him: Father, take me to bathe in warm water; wash me in cold water; give me nuts, almonds, peaches, pomegranates – and his father gives them to him.

Clearly this is a child so spoiled he hardly know what he wants. He asks to bathe in hot water – and we should note that the Romans always saw hot water as a symbol of luxury and decadence – Tacitus tells us that providing hot baths was one of the ways the Romans managed to enslave the British.²⁷ However, the moment this child has his hot water he wants cold water! And then he nags his father for a long list of treats – and the first one he thinks of is nuts. Since our spoiled child also includes almonds in his wants list, we may deduce that he is using *egozim* (nuts) here to mean walnuts.

Since nuts were so evidently desirable it was not only the shopkeepers who used them as bribes – ordinary parents would do the same. The festive Passover Seder meal we referred to earlier included long rituals and recitals before getting to the meal. BTPesahim 109a, for example, specifically says that children should be kept awake through the long rituals by giving them nuts and parched corn so they won't fall asleep.²⁸ The meal, as we saw before, was to end not with these desirable nuts and parched corn but with a special piece of unleavened bread that was symbolic of the Passover lamb. This was presumably not much of an incentive for the children to stay awake, so the parents are recommended to turn the ritual into a game and pretend to steal and hide this last piece of *matzah*, unleavened bread. Nowadays it is still traditional for everyone to try to steal the *matzah*, and since the meal can't end without eating it the celebrant is forced to bargain with the child who holds the trump card. This is certainly worth staying awake for. And talking of games, nuts were perhaps so popular because they could also be played with by children, and not just eaten. The midrashim refer on a number of occasions to nuts as “the plaything of children and the amusement of kings” – and Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati 11 expounds on this – when the Jews are good, “kings will be their nursing fathers” – this is a verse from Isaiah – but if the Jews are bad, they will become the plaything of the nations.²⁹ To return to our Talmudic sources, women too are

²⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola* 21.

²⁸ Midrash Sechel Tov Shemot 12,10.

²⁹ On the subject of nuts and games, my 91-year old father tells me that when he was a child it was traditional to be given nuts to play with on a Jewish festival, particularly on the festivals of Hanukah and Passover.

shown as playing with nuts in BTERuvin 107a – something not allowed on the Sabbath, in case they start digging in the earth to make a flat surface, which is work which is not allowed. Children also played with the abandoned nutshells – Mishnah Kelim 3,2 discusses children who use nut-shells and acorns and dried pomegranate skin as cups for playing in the sand. And the Tosefta (Shabbat 13.16) tells us that nuts were used to make rattles for babies.

Nuts and children are thus clearly closely associated in the Talmudic sources. As well as being toys and treats, nuts are used several times in tests. In one case in BTGittin 64b we see that nuts are used in developmental testing of children – a child who understands will throw away a pebble in order to take a nut, whereas a very small child will not know the difference between them.

Nuts are also used to distinguish between children, between boys and girls. A story is told in Midrash Proverbs 1 of the Queen of Sheba testing the wisdom of King Solomon.

She brought before him boys and girls, all of the same appearance, all of the same height, all clothed the same and told him to distinguish the boys from the girls. He told his eunuchs to bring him nuts, and began to hand them out to the children. The boys unashamedly lifted up their tunics to collect the nuts in it. The girls were embarrassed to do this, and modestly collected them in their scarves. He told the queen: ‘These are boys and these are girls’. She said to him: ‘My son, you are a great sage’.

There is another use made of children’s liking for nuts in a legal ceremony in a passage mentioned a few times in the Talmudic sources.³⁰ If a man sold his family land, or married a woman beneath his social rank, his relatives would symbolically cut him off by bringing jars of nuts and parched corn and breaking them in the presence of children. The children would pick up the nuts and say: “This man has been cut off from his inheritance or from his family”. If he later bought back the land or divorced his wife they would repeat the ceremony of breaking the jars, and this time the children would pick up the nuts and corn and say: “This man has returned to his possession or to his family”. When the children grew up, their memory of this ceremony, re-inforced by eating all those nuts, would be admissible as evidence in a court of law, even though they had been under-age witnesses at the time.

Nuts, of course, are ideal provisions to take on a journey even for adults, as they do not go bad and do not need cooking. Midrash Genesis Rabbah lx,11 shows us how valuable they were in this context. The Bible gives a list of the valuable things Abraham’s servant took with him when he set off to go back to Mesopotamia to

³⁰ JTKetubot 2.26d 10; JTQiddushim 1.60c 5; Midrash Ruth Rabbah 7.11; Yalqut Shimoni Ruth 447.

find a wife for his master's son Isaac. When he arrived at his destination and found Rebecca, Isaac's future wife, he gave her brother and her mother silver and gold and garments and what the A.V. calls 'precious things'. The rabbis explain these 'precious things' as nuts and parched corn. Were nuts and parched corn really so valuable?, someone asks. Yes, comes the answer, if a man goes on a journey without them he will suffer!

Here the traveller who provisions himself with nuts is obviously a grown man, but nuts were clearly so strongly associated with children that there are some sources which show them as special provision for *children* on a journey. Thus the Mekhilta de Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai 12 (39) describes the haste in which the Jews left Egypt at the Exodus: they could not bake proper loaves of bread, just *harara*, hasty bread, which, as we saw above, was unleavened because they could not afford the time to wait until it rose. They did not take proper provisions and they had nothing in hand for the way – not even nuts and parched corn for the children.

The Talmudic sources have shown us the value placed on nuts for children by both the children themselves and by adults. Jewish sources in general have no problems with the enjoyment of good food, unlike many of their contemporary ascetic Christian writers, who often inveigh against meat and wine in particular. So it is interesting to find that on the subject of nuts and children there is a parallel to the picture we have seen in the Jewish sources in the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. Augustine, who lived in north Africa in the fourth century, is writing about the trials of growing up, and says:

We may exchange our infant teachers and school teachers, nuts and footballs and singing birds for prefects and kings, for money, land and slaves; but the same desires stay with us through all the stages of our lives, just as severer penalties replace the beating of a schoolmaster... (*Confessions* 1.19).

In this passage, infant teachers and school teachers are paralleled to prefects and kings, those who rule our lives, while “nuts, footballs and singing birds”, the prized possessions of the child, become the adult's “money, land and slaves”. Is it reading too much into Augustine to say that nuts here have become the currency of the child?

To sum up our discussion of children's food. We have seen how babies were breast-fed, preferably by their own mothers, but also by wet-nurses. If even this was not available, they could be fed using a ram's horn. They may also have been given honey and oil at times. Milk and eggs are mentioned as weaning foods, and perhaps moistened breadcrumbs were also used. Since children were weaned at the age of two years or even later, they could presumably be weaned on to an adult diet. It is unclear whether children were given eggs and *kutah*, a sharp relish, to eat or whether this was applied externally. There is evidence of *harara*, hasty bread, being made as a quick and cheap way to feed a child. Milk and fowl may well have

been seen as valuable food in nourishing pubescent girls, although these and other recommendations for nutrition may have had magical components. Nuts were seen as a children's food par excellence: although adults ate nuts often as dessert or when on a long journey, the Talmudic literature saw nuts as particularly associated with children. They were seen as extremely desirable for children, who would want them to celebrate festivals. They could be used as bribes in order to get the children to behave as adults wanted – whether by shop-keepers to entice them into their shops, by their parents to keep them awake or to reinforce their memories of important rituals. Nuts could also be used in testing children. They were also convenient foods to take for children on a journey. For their part, children put them at the head of their 'wants' list, perhaps because after eating them they could also use the shells as toys. The contemporary Christian St Augustine appears to present nuts as the currency of the child.

In conclusion: the Jerusalem Talmud records mothers making *harara*, hasty bread, for her child, and a Midrash cited above showed that nuts were seen as food particularly appropriate for children going on a journey. This same thought is expressed even more beautifully in another Midrash on the Book of Exodus, Shemot Rabbah 3.4. Here Moses is discussing with God what provision there will be for the children of Israel, if he leads them out of Egypt. I think it is most appropriate for a paper on children's foods in the Talmudic literature to end with this passage:

Moses said to God: You tell me to go and bring out Israel [from Egypt]. Where can I give them shelter in summer from the heat and in winter from the cold? Where shall I get enough food and drink? [Look] how many midwives they have! And how many pregnant women! And how many little ones! What food have you prepared for the midwives? What kind of delicacies have you prepared for the pregnant women? How much nuts and parched corn have you prepared for the little ones?... God said to him: [When you see] that the *harara*, the hasty bread which they will take with them from Egypt will last for thirty days, you will know how I will lead them!

Silke Trzcionka

**Calypso's Cauldron:
The ritual ingredients of early-Byzantine love spells**

It has been said that “all is fair in love and war”. Certainly in Byzantium this seems to have been the case when we consider individuals’ machinations involving the supernatural, which included the use of spells, charms, potions, lotions and curses. Methods for instilling and inciting desire were, it appears, a constant factor in the social and sexual landscape of the Graeco-Roman world.¹ Thus when it came to love and desire, individuals had a variety of supernaturally-potent instigators and facilitators to further their cause.

In this paper I shall be discussing three particular forms of supernatural love ritual that sought to inspire desire in their targets. These include the use of apples, male love-lotions, and wine. The focus on these three forms is determined by two main features of supernatural love practices. Firstly, there are only four forms of love practice for which I have uncovered some reasonable information regarding the ingredients used in the rituals. Secondly, the three forms considered below are quite distinguishable from the excluded fourth type, the erotic *defixiones*. The latter could involve the use of a wide range of ingredients such as water, oil, dates, beetles, doves’ blood and vultures’ brains, to name but a few;² however, these ingredients were usually incorporated in the ritual offerings to the *daimones* or divinities invoked in the spell and/or incantation. Their exclusion here, outside of the constraints of the paper, relates to the use of the ingredients as offerings, as well as the fact that these rituals required no apparent physical interaction with the target for the spell to take effect – *daimones* and divinities alone were involved. In contrast, the methods considered in this paper involved the physical receipt, by the victim or target, of an enchanted substance or individual in order for the love spell to be instigated. With this distinction in mind, I shall be discussing the use of

¹ M. Meyer and R. Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic texts of ritual power* (San Francisco 1994), 147.

² For examples of spells which use a variety of liquid, food, incense, and animal by-products see: nos 73, 74, 79 in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 153-159, 167-169; also PGM 4.1265-1274, 4.1390-1495, 4.1496-1595, 4.1716-1870, 4.1928-2005, 4.2441-2621, 4.2708-2784, 4.2891-2942, 4.2943-2966, 7.478-490, 10.1-23, 7.191-192, 12.14-95, 36.134-160, 36.283-294, 41.1-38; & PDM 14.366-375, 14.376-394, 14.724-726 (K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 3 vols [Berlin, Leipzig and Stuttgart 1928-1941]; H.D. Betz [ed.], *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic spells* [Chicago and London 1992]).

enchanted apples (μηλον) to indicate and incite desire, the use of male love-lotions to inspire female desire, as well as the use of spiked wine to achieve the same result. The discussion will also, given the very nature of the subject matter and the individuals it involves, call upon the due consideration of gender roles in these processes.

The study begins with the enchanted apple, or μηλον – the broader meaning of which extends to include other multi-seeded fruits such as pomegranates and quinces³ – and its association with desire. This is an association that, it is worth noting, is not restricted to Graeco-Roman society and can be found in various cultures, especially in relation to multi-seeded fruit such as apples, quinces and pomegranates that are seemingly linked with concepts of fertility and growth.⁴

Perhaps the best known account of the apple in Greek literary tradition, or ‘blended myth’ as Sallustius calls it, is the judging of beauty by Paris and his passing of the ‘golden apple’ (μηλον χρυσοῦν) to Aphrodite.⁵ Already in this account there is an association of the apple with not only beauty, but also with desire. This is an association that is also seen in an epigram of Plato which states: “I throw you an apple, and if willingly you love me, take it and share your virginity”,⁶ suggesting an awareness of both a sexual association with apples, and the ritual method of throwing and accepting fruit which indicated erotic interest. In addition to such records of the apple, the Greek wedding ceremony included a ritual involving the offering and acceptance of a quince-apple by the newly-weds before entering the bed chamber on their wedding night.⁷ Thus, it can be established that the ‘throwing’ of an apple or piece of an apple at a female, and the latter’s acceptance of the fruit, served to indicate the sexual interest of the parties involved.

³ Μηλον – “an apple or (generally) any tree fruit; pl. metaph. of a girl’s breasts” (definition in Liddel & Scott). See also the discussion in C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (London and Cambridge, Mass. 1999), 69 n. 126. I would like to acknowledge at this point that this paper is greatly indebted to Faraone’s work, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*.

⁴ Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 70; see also B.S. Thornton, *Eros. The myth of ancient Greek sexuality* (Boulder, Colo. 1997), 143-146.

⁵ Bk 4 in Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, ed. and trans. A.D. Nock (Cambridge 1926), 6-7. Also bk 5 (92.18) in *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott (Byzantina Australiensia 4, Melbourne 1986).

⁶ Plato, *Pi. P.* 9.110 (cited in Thornton, *Eros*, 143).

⁷ Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 69-73, 78; also Thornton, *Eros*, 143. The Persian bridegroom also ate a μηλον before entering the marriage chamber (Strabo 15,3,17); see: E. Stock McCartney, “How the Apple became a Token of Love”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 41 (1925), 70-81; Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 70-71; also Plutarch, *Moralia* 138. On the association of apples or pomegranates with love, marriage and the selection of the imperial consort, see S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley 1971), 493 (cited in A. Dalby, *Siren Feasts. A history of food and gastronomy in Greece* [London and New York 1996], 198).

That this sexual association with apples continued into the Byzantine period is suggested in John Malalas' account of the emperor Theodosius II and his Phrygian apple. In this case Malalas records that the emperor Theodosius, having been given an enormous Phrygian apple, sent it to his wife Eudokia. The latter, however, rather than eating the fruit, sent it on to the magister Paulinus who was a friend of the emperor. It is the emperor's reaction upon re-receiving the apple that intimates a sexual association with the exchange of this fruit. For Theodosius, upon questioning his wife and being told that she had indeed eaten the fruit, presents the apple and, angry, reveals his suspicions that Eudokia was in love with Paulinus because she had sent the apple to him and denied it. Thus it appears that Eudokia's gift of the apple to Paulinus was interpreted as an indication of her desire for this "very handsome young man", and even though the latter did not accept it, the fact that the empress did not eat of the fruit her husband gave her and passed it on to another man resulted in Paulinus' death.⁸

Thus we have a scenario in which a husband is likely to be expressing (sexual) interest in his wife by sending her the apple. His interest is, however, unreciprocated as his wife leaves the fruit untouched (although she flatly denies doing so). She then offers the fruit to another man, possibly expressing her desire for him. Once again, though, the apple, and the interest and advances it represents, are not accepted.

The implications of this 'apple scenario' and the inferences that can be drawn from it in regard to sexuality and gender will be addressed shortly. First, I shall illustrate the further association of the enchanted apple with 'magic',⁹ for although not explicitly mentioned above, the evidence of 'magical' texts suggests that the 'magical' characteristics of the apple, and the desire its transmission indicates, and even incites, should be recognised. Indeed it is more than likely that some form of ('magical') incantation was spoken over the apple and it is this procedure that imbued the fruit with its erotic power.¹⁰ Such an assertion is supported by a Greek spell from the Roman imperial period which reads:

Incantation over an apple (melon). Say it three times: 'I shall strike with apples... I shall give this *pharmakon* – always timely and edible – to mortal men and immortal gods. To whichever woman I give or at whichever woman I throw the apple or hit with it, setting everything aside, may she be mad for my love – whether she takes it in her hand and eats it...or sets it in her bosom – and

⁸ Malalas, *Chronicle* 14.8.

⁹ The term 'magic' is qualified within this paper, as its use is inherently problematic. For a discussion on the term 'magic', its definition, and hence the problems associated with its use, see Chapter 2 in S. Trzcionka, *Relating to the Supernatural. A case study of fourth-century Syria and Palestine*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Adelaide 2004), esp. § 2.2.

¹⁰ See Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 73-75.

may she not stop loving me. O Lady Cyprogenia, bring to perfection this perfect incantation.’¹¹

Much later evidence indicates that this connection of ‘magic’ with the apple continued through the centuries; for instance, the prescribed use of an apple inscribed with ‘magical’ signs that was able to affect the will of the female who ate it.¹² There is also an extant, ninth-century Coptic papyrus that seeks to attract a woman to a man by instilling power into pieces of fruit, possibly apples. The spell reads:

†I adjure [you by] your names and your powers and your amulets and the glorious places where [you] dwell, that you come down upon these [pieces of fruit(?)] that are in my right hand, I [...], so that [...(when)] she eats of them, you may give her desire for me, and she may desire me with endless desire and come to me in the place where I am, and I may lay my breast upon her and satisfy all my desire with her, and she may satisfy all my desire, right now, right now, at once, at once!¹³

Thus it can be established that associations could be made in the Graeco-Roman world between an apple, desire, and ‘magic’, the ‘magical ingredient’ assisting in instilling that desire.

There are some interesting points worth considering in relation to the ‘enchanted melon’ concerning both gender, and related social concepts of sexuality. Firstly, it is generally the male who offers the fruit to a female (the example of Eudokia presented above is a notable exception). If it were generally understood, for example, that apples signify erotic intent (something that the wedding ritual suggests), then the acceptance of the fruit clearly signifies a female’s interest. If, furthermore, it is known (and this is by no means a certain assumption) that the fruit could be enchanted in order to instil desire in the recipient, then the acceptance of the fruit by a woman would seemingly have been made with the recipient fully aware of its potential and hence her acceptance of that intention a statement of sexual assertiveness and control.¹⁴ Such an assertion, however, needs to take into consideration the degree of choice available to the female recipient. In the case of the wedding, for example, this is not so clear cut. For while the bride may indeed be a happy and willing recipient on the threshold of her married life,

¹¹ ...επι μηλο[υ] εποδη... Trans. and Greek text, 72.I.5-14, in R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini (eds), *Supplementum Magicum*, 2 vols (Papyrologica Coloniensia 16.1-2, Opladen 1990-1992).

¹² R.P.H. Greenfield, “A Contribution to the Study of Palaeologan Magic”, in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic* (Washington D.C 1995:138-146), 139-140.

¹³ Trans. and Greek text, no.76 (Berlin 8325), Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*.

¹⁴ On the acceptance of the apple as female consent in a Greek context, see Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, esp. 71-72, 77-78.

there is also the consideration that, given social and familial expectations (and marriage arrangements), she has very little choice in accepting the fruit. Thus, the 'enchanted apple', and the questions of a female's limited or unlimited control in accepting the fruit, provide an interesting area for consideration on the topic of female sexuality as well as women's sexual empowerment in the Graeco-Roman world.

This leads onto the second point for consideration, namely the account of Eudokia and the Phrygian apple. Eudokia in offering the apple to Paulinus is effectively offering herself, sexually, to another man. Such an act could have been seen as an adulterous act and, given the edicts of the period, harshly punished.¹⁵ Indeed, it is worth noting here that she effectively exiles herself to Jerusalem after the event.¹⁶ Eudokia's actions, however, are of interest here not simply because she is a married woman, but because she is a woman. That is, given that the passing of an apple is generally associated with male behaviour, she clearly breaks with tradition and assumes a male role in doing so. She is not, however, the only female to have acted thus; courtesans were known to have used this method for attracting the attention of men in classical Greece.¹⁷ Thus the empress' actions could reveal that women, and not only courtesans, could use this method of 'flirtation'. Alternately, as this action is commonly associated with men it could represent the empress as a woman able, due to her powerful position, to adopt practices usually considered to be masculine. Or Eudokia's use of this technique, familiar with courtesans, could reveal the nature of the relationship that she actually had with the ill-fated Paulinus (although given that he did not accept the fruit, perhaps not).

A third point on the apple relates to the manner in which it is transferred. The exchange of fruit presents the notion of a relatively 'open', almost 'public' display of romantic interest between the male and female, especially when considering the traditional practice of throwing the fruit at the desired female. Faraone suggests that the public aspect of this practice can be paralleled with consenting 'betrothal marriages' in which both of the families concerned with the match agree and consent to the union.¹⁸ This point is strengthened when one considers that the practice does imply that in the acceptance of the apple, the female consents to the male's seduction. Given the social expectations of sexual behaviour and marriage in the Graeco-Roman world, particularly amongst women, it would thus seem appropriate to assume that acceptance of the desirous intentions means marriage. I would argue that this inference is further supported by the association of the apple with fertility; thus the ultimate aim of the apple-seduction, as also of marriage, could be seen to be procreation.

¹⁵ See CTh 9.2.5; 9.38; 9.7; 9.40.1; 3.16.1-2; 11.36.1,4,7; Sirm. 8; Nmaj. 9.1.

¹⁶ Malalas, *Chronicle* 14.8.

¹⁷ See discussion in Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 149-150.

¹⁸ See Faraone's proposal in *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 78-80.

Finally, it is difficult to determine how often the throwing of an apple would have occurred outside of the marriage ritual. The extant spell formulae certainly suggest that the practice was not always associated with weddings. Indeed Eudokia's case also implies a social understanding of the relevance of this act outside of the wedding celebration (best represented in Theodosius' response, and even in her self-exile to Jerusalem). If this act were frequent enough for its intentions to be widely understood in society, and considering the brief discussion thus far, then a closer study of the practice would be warranted in order to gain further insight into gendered and sexual relations in the Graeco-Roman world.

I would like to move on now to another 'magical' love practice, namely the male love-lotion, and briefly consider some of the issues regarding gender, sexuality, and relationships that the use of these lotions raises.

Numerous recipes in the magical papyri prescribe the use of herbs, foods, and various exotic, or even disgusting materials such as dung, in lotions to be utilised by men to stimulate female desire.¹⁹ For example: "A prescription to cause a woman to love a man: Fruit of acacia; grind with honey; anoint his phallus with it; and lie with the woman!"²⁰ In all cases these supernatural lotions required intercourse in order to affect the woman.²¹ Take, for instance, the instruction that followed the production of a potion, that reads: "When you [wish] to make it do its work, you should anoint your phallus and your face and you should lie with the woman to whom you will do it".²²

Many of the prescriptions provide men with directions to make a woman enjoy sexual intercourse. These potions include the pounding together of hawk's dung, salt, reed, the bele plant, juniper, seeds, henna, and honey – even weasel's dung is suggested.²³

Such concerns for a female's libido and enjoyment by men raises a number of questions about relationships in the Graeco-Roman world. For instance, were these lotions intended for wives or concubines? An early text on a papyrus of the third century gives instructions for the ingredients and procedure for ensuring 'fun' with a concubine, although it is quite possible that 'fun' referred purely to the male's pleasure.²⁴ Despite the ambiguities of the latter example, however, it does appear that these spell prescriptions were aphrodisiacs being used by males to arouse

¹⁹ The creation of the lotions could require quite elaborate preparation which included activities to be undertaken at various stages of the lunar cycle. See e.g. PDM 14.335-355.

²⁰ PDM 14.930-932. See also PDM 14.1046-1047. All PDM and PGM translations are taken from Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*.

²¹ E.g. PDM 14.355-365.

²² PDM 14.335-355.

²³ PDM 14.1037-1038, 14.1049-1055, 14.1130-1140, 14.1190-1193.

²⁴ "To have fun with a concubine(?): rub in yourself...and the excrement of a swallow together with honey. To copulate a lot: bruise seed of rocket and small pine-cones together with wine and drink it on an empty stomach." Trans., no.83, Daniel and Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum*.

interest in women, and possibly even to ensure that women enjoyed the experience. Thus these potions appear to be an inversion of the popular portrayal of aphrodisiacs in the Graeco-Roman world that depicts the woman as the instigator seeking to influence the feelings and desires of her husband.²⁵

I will therefore consider contemporary thoughts on sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world in order to gain some insight into the use of aphrodisiacs by men on women as well as the social context that frames or determines their use. It has been argued that in Greek thought there existed the notion that food, wine and sex were associated with nature. As natural forces they always tended to be excessive, and thus need to be controlled, for "to be free in relation to pleasures was to be free of their authority; it was not to be their slave".²⁶ Consequently men would seek to control excessive behaviour. Women, on the other hand, were irrational and unable to control their desires, thus posing a threat to masculine control as they wielded sexual power. It was marriage and weaving (!), that tamed them.²⁷

If this view of sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world is accepted, the male love-lotions come as quite a surprise, particularly the role assigned the female recipient. If females were considered sexual beings, closer to the irrational than the rational, incapable of moderation, then why would a man seek to inspire their desires? Perhaps Foucault offers an answer in his comment on the changing role of marriage in the Roman world, with a move towards a perception of the 'couple' and a notion that pleasure could be given within the marriage.²⁸ This being the case, then the love-lotions could be seen as an affirmation of such ideas. However, Foucault also argued that a wife was not to be treated as a lover or a mistress, but as a wife. To do otherwise was to insult her.²⁹ Thus it could be said that the use of an aphrodisiac on a wife would have been seen as a slight on her character.

Foucault's argument on the position of, and thereby expectation of behaviour towards, the Roman wife seems feasible. From what we can discern of marital relationships, the role of the wife was as matron of the household. She was to behave honourably and discreetly. This does not necessarily mean that in the

²⁵ On the female use of aphrodisiacs see especially Faraone's work on "Spells for inducing Affection (Philia)" (*Ancient Greek Love Magic*, chap. 3: 96-131); also J.J. Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek magic and religion* (New York and Oxford 1991: 214-243), 221, 227-228.

²⁶ M. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. The history of sexuality*, vol. 2, trans. R. Hurley (Harmondsworth 1985), 79. See also Thornton, *Eros*, 23; and L. LiDonnici, "Burning for It: Erotic spells for fever and compulsion in the ancient Mediterranean world", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 39 (1998: 63-98), 74-77.

²⁷ On this point see Thornton, *Eros*, 73-75, 81-83. Consider also Foucault's argument that immoderate behaviour derives from passivity that relates it to femininity, it equates to a state of non-resistance and hence a position of weakness and submission (*Use of Pleasure*, 83-84).

²⁸ See M. Foucault, *The Care of the Self. The history of sexuality*, vol. 3, trans. R. Hurley (Harmondsworth 1986), 148-149, 176-185.

²⁹ Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 176-185, esp. 177-178.

matter of the bedroom her character did not change. However, if the idea of control is associated with the idea of the Roman matron, such control must surely include discipline over sexual desire (given the social perception of desire equating to weakness) and consequently over her relations with her husband. These male love-lotions do not, therefore, necessarily conform to such ideas of matronly control.

Thus, if the male love-lotion does not conform with our understanding of the role of wife, because it could be seen as insulting or undermining her position of control of self, then these aphrodisiacs could offer us a means for reconsidering the role of the Roman wife. Alternately, however, the love-lotion could be associated with a different male-female relationship. It does not seem feasible to say that the lotions would have been used with prostitutes, given their purpose. That is, a male might be less concerned with arousing the interest, and even enjoyment, of a prostitute. These potions could often also involve lengthy procedures that, even if prepared by a practitioner, could still require storage and forethought – more the domain of a lover rather than a prostitute. Therefore, I would suggest that these lotions were meant for concubines. The use of these with a wife would be to demote her to the role of lover, and thereby be adulterous. However, to use the aphrodisiac with a concubine does not seem quite so dishonourable.

A further support for the proposal that the male love-lotions were used for concubines is the idea that these measures (given their ‘magical’ aspect) could be used by a man with a concubine as a form of ‘counter-magic’. Concubines were perceived to utilise various ‘magical’ means to ensure the interest of males. Consider, for instance, the account in Theodoret’s *Religious History* in which a wife is distressed by the power exerted over her husband by a courtesan and her ‘magical’ practices.³⁰ Therefore, if we accept the common argument that a male being under the spell of a female was perceived of as an emasculation, a subordination of the aggressive male role,³¹ then protecting oneself from a concubine’s spell would be requisite. That is, the spell of a female made a man powerless and unable to control his own desires, and, as has already been mentioned above, this lack of control made the male weak. Thus, in order to counteract a negative ‘magical’ influence, particularly from a female renowned for using such magical devices, could it not be possible that a male might seek to enchant the concubine and fill her with desire beyond that of her own, thereby restoring the proper and acceptable balance of male control and female lack-of-control?

³⁰ Theodoret, *HR* 8.13.

³¹ Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 128-130; C.A. Faraone, “Sex and Power: Male-targeting aphrodisiacs in the Greek magical tradition”, *Helios* 19.1/2 (1992: 92-101), 100; C.A. Faraone, “Deianira’s Mistake and the Demise of Heracles: Erotic Magic in Sophocles’ *Trachinae*”, *Helios* 21.2 (1994: 115-136), 115-116; F. Graf, “How to Cope with a Difficult Life. A view of ancient magic”, in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton seminar and symposium* (Leiden and New York 1997: 93-114), 96.

I move now to the final form of 'magical' love practice to be discussed in this paper, namely wine, the long acknowledged aphrodisiac of the Graeco-Roman world. Sources from all periods of Graeco-Roman history instruct in the correct proportions of water and wine to be mixed in order to instil but not deflate desire,³² and wine, like apples, could be closely aligned with enchantment. The use of such 'magically'-spiked wine was traditionally associated with women wanting to have their amorous way with their husbands.³³ Therefore it is particularly interesting that extant 'magical' prescriptions from later periods are instructions for men who wish to affect women through enchanted wine.

One example is a demotic spell which seeks to "put the heart of a woman after a man" and includes a procedure for creating a potion which is to be served to the woman in a goblet of wine. The potion includes such ingredients as the blood of a male donkey and the blood of the tick of a black cow.³⁴ Another spell requires the use of a shrew mouse and the blood of the man's finger as ingredients pounded and moulded into a ball and then put in a cup of wine for the woman to drink so that she would become mad after the male instigator. (It also states that if the mouse's gall is included in the wine or some food, the woman will die instantly!)³⁵

Once again we are presented with the issue of men seeking to instil desire in women, especially to incite desire, 'love' or passion. And a noticeable aspect of this method is that it requires some form of intimacy in order for the man to be able to give the wine to the woman to drink (and that the woman even drinks wine in his company).³⁶ This suggests that some relationship or degree of interaction already exists between the protagonist and his female target. The argument that I have already made for the use of aphrodisiac potions in a concubinage relationship rather than a marriage may still hold. However, the idea of female enjoyment is not evident here, nor is the overt physical presence of the 'male love-lotion'. Thus it is quite possible that such spiked-wine may have been used to increase the attention of a wife. This idea is supported by a seventh-century spell in which the spiked-wine is to function as a means for ensuring that the female becomes pregnant.³⁷ This spell-recipe for a man generally suggests that he would be using it for his wife in order, one presumes, to produce legitimate heirs.

There is another aspect to this use of the aphrodisiac. The fact that the potion is concealed within the wine may raise questions regarding trust. Indeed earlier Greek anecdotes joke of the untrustworthiness of women who would spike men's

³² Winkler, "Constraints of Eros", 221; Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 126.

³³ Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, chap. 3: 96-131, esp. 126-130; also Faraone, "Deianira's Mistake", 124. On the association of women with wine see Thornton, *Eros*, 73.

³⁴ PDM 14.772-804.

³⁵ PDM 14.1206-1218.

³⁶ On women drinking wine in Rome see A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke and New York 2001), 9.

³⁷ No. 83, in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*.

drinks.³⁸ These spells suggest the inversion of this; that is, the untrustworthiness of men. While this is quite possible, I would argue that traditional associations of wine with desire would in fact prepare the recipient of the wine cup for the erotic intentions of the 'man-bearing-wine', spiked or un-spiked. Not to mention the fact that the ingredients used in the spiking-mixtures would not necessarily blend in with the flavour of the wine, and hence be somewhat obvious to the consumer. Thus, I would argue that, as was the case with the apples, the acceptance of the wine cup from the male implied consent by the female and therefore, as with the apple, suggests some degree of sexual empowerment. However, having said this, allowance must also be made for the fact that the male may not be the one presenting the wine to the target. Consider, for instance, an account in Theodoret's *Religious History* in which a love potion was administered to its target by the latter's maid.³⁹ In such a case, regardless of the possible lack of taste of the spiked-wine, there does appear to be a duplicity inherent in the use of such an aphrodisiac, for consent is not granted. Thus, issues regarding mistrust and duplicitous machinations in male-female relationships do arise.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this paper has not sought to offer an in-depth investigation into the area of 'magical' love practices, merely an introductory discussion into the world of early-Byzantine love 'magic' as it relates to food and drink. Such practices, predominantly orchestrated by men, sought to instil or indicate desire. The women in these instances were, it appears, often empowered to accept the attentions and intentions of these men by accepting the fruit or wine presented to them; and also to accept relations with a man using what must have been a quite obvious potion on his phallus or face! However, the use of 'magical' powers in order to arouse interest in a female subject also indicates a need for men to control female passion so as to suit their own desires. What we see then in these forms of love 'magic' is a play between the sexual roles of males and females and a wish to control the desire of both in some way. These practices thus raise a number of interesting issues in relation to gender and sexuality which could provide considerable insight into male-female relations (such as marriage and concubinage) in Graeco-Roman society. Certainly studies in the area of gender and sexuality would benefit from due consideration of the 'magical' evidence.

³⁸ See again Faraone's discussion in *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, chap. 3: 96-97, 119-121.

³⁹ Theodoret, *HR* 13.10-12.

Ken Parry

Vegetarianism in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The transmission of a regimen¹

The significance of a vegetarian (χορτοφάγος) diet in Byzantium cannot be assessed without reference to the practice of avoiding meat in the wider context of late antiquity. The rejection of meat eating on philosophical and religious grounds was one that occupied the attention of many thinkers and intellectuals. The concern with food prohibitions among philosophers and religious teachers is apparent from the range of texts that mention the subject. Philosophy and religion in late antiquity were about living according to the right regimen as well as about understanding a particular worldview. The early Christians inherited this view of the close relationship between lifestyle and belief, and although they often claimed the moral high ground, they did not have a monopoly on ethical standards. The issues raised by the human consumption of animal meat were faced by thinkers from a variety of traditions and backgrounds. For the majority of them the rejection of meat eating was never simply a personal choice that did not impinge upon others. The role of animal sacrifice in late antique religious practice was considered essential for the good of the state and for maintaining proper relations with the gods. In late antiquity the avoidance of meat could not but involve social and political dissent.

The Graeco-Roman Tradition

The Christian concern over eating meat sacrificed to the gods was also a problem for pagan vegetarians. For a philosopher like Plotinus in the third century, who did not participate in the rites of the state religion, the question of eating sacrificed meat did not impinge upon his vegetarianism. But for Proclus in the fifth century, who did participate in religious rites, the issue was one that did impinge upon his vegetarian diet. In his *Life of Proclus* Marinus tells us that the philosopher “for the most part made it a rule to abstain from living animals, but if some pressing occasion called on him to eat them, he merely tasted them, and then only for the sake of piety”.² With the renewed interest in theurgy and cultic practices among the later Neoplatonists changes were made to the traditional way of life.

¹ I should like to acknowledge the generosity of the Society for the Study of Early Christianity at Macquarie University for funding my attendance at the 13th Conference of the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, Adelaide, July 11-12, 2003.

² Marinus, *Vita Procli* 9; see *Neoplatonic Saints: The lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their students*, trans. with an intro. by M. Edwards (Translated Texts for Historians 35, Liverpool

In the biographies of the two Neoplatonic thinkers Plotinus and Proclus the question of diet is central to their philosophical asceticism. In his *Life of Plotinus* Porphyry reports that when the philosopher was ill he would not “consent to remedies taken from animals, saying that he would not take nourishment even from the bodies of domestic animals”.³ He not only abstained from animal products but also undertook fasting as a way of helping his concentration. Plotinus followed the Platonic and Cynic schools in attributing reason to animals, against the Aristotelian and Stoic denial of rationality to animals.⁴ The ancient debate about whether animals had reason and felt pain was often one that ended in a slippery slope argument: that is, if we start sparing animals we will have to spare plants as well. Augustine used this argument against the Manichaeans to maintain that plants had no feelings and animals no reason. He went so far as to say that “there is no community of rights between us and animals and trees”.⁵ On this point Porphyry states that there is no comparison between plants and animals because animals are rational, feel pain and terror, and so can be unjustly treated.⁶

For the emperor Julian in the fourth century, a Neopythagorean who promoted theurgic practices, only certain animals were suitable cuisine for the gods.

Birds, we may eat, except only those few which are commonly held sacred, and ordinary four-footed animals, except the pig. This animal is banned as food during the sacred rites because by its shape and way of life...it belongs wholly to the earth. And therefore men came to believe that it was an acceptable offering to the gods of the underworld. For this animal does not look up to the sky, not only because it has no such desire, but because it is so made that it can never look upwards.⁷

The unfortunate pig got a raw deal in the ancient world as it was a common sacrificial victim. In the second century Galen suggests a similarity between the flesh of man and that of the pig because people have been known to eat human flesh served up to them as pork by deceptive caterers without the slightest

2000), and K.W. Harl, “Sacrifice and Pagan Belief in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Byzantium”, *Past and Present* 128 (1990), 7-27.

³ Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 2.

⁴ For background see J. Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike* (Berlin 1935); D.A. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst 1984); R. Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The origins of the western debate* (Cornell 1993).

⁵ Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, 17.54, 59, trans. R. Stothert, *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy* (Edinburgh 1872).

⁶ Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 3, 18-19, see *Porphyry On Abstinence from Animal food*, trans. by Thomas Taylor, ed. and intro. by E. Wynne-Tyson (London 1965). Greek text with French translation in *Porphyre de l'abstinence*, 3 vols (Collection des Universités de France, Paris 1977, 1979, 1995).

⁷ Julian, *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*, in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 1, trans. W.C. Wright (Loeb Classical Library, London and Cambridge, Mass. 1954), 494.

suspicion, so like is it to pork in both taste and smell.⁸ The charge of cannibalism made by pagans against Christians for eating the body and blood of their god is not so outrageous in the context of the debate about animal sacrifice.⁹

For Iamblichus in the fourth century the Neopythagorean regimen represents the summit of the philosophical life. He writes:

A well-ordered diet makes a great contribution to the best education, so let us consider Pythagoras' rules about this. He banned all foods which are windy and cause disturbance, and recommended and advised the use of those which settle and sustain the state of the body... The rule to 'abstain from beans' has many reasons, sacred, natural and concerned with the soul... These were his general rules on food, but privately, for those philosophers who had reached the most sublime heights of knowledge, he ruled out once for all those foods which are unnecessary and unjust, telling them never to eat any living creature, drink wine, sacrifice living things to the gods or hurt them in any way... That is how he lived himself, abstaining from animal food and worshipping at bloodless altars...and taming wild animals and educating them by words and actions... For animals are akin to us, sharing life and basic constituents and composition, linked in a kind of brotherhood. Other students, whose life was not so pure and holy and philosophic, were allowed to eat some animal food, though even they had fixed periods of abstinence.¹⁰

A couple of points for consideration emerge from this passage. The first is the division in the community structure of the Neopythagoreans between the 'hearers' (ἀκουσματικοί) and the 'learned' (μαθηματικοί), which corresponds to the distinction between the 'hearers' (ἀκροαταί) and the 'followers' (ζηλωταί) among those who attended Plotinus' lectures.¹¹ But more importantly it seems to correspond to the division between the 'auditors' (κατηχούμενοι) and the 'elect' (ἐκλεκτοί) in the Manichaean community. Furthermore, and this is the second point to consider, the two select groups in both the Neopythagorean and

⁸ Galen, *De Alimentorum Facultatibus*, bk 3, trans. M. Grant, *Galen on Food and Diet* (London and New York 2000), 155.

⁹ On anthropophagy in early Christianity, see A. McGowan, "Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism against Christians in the Second Century", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), 413-442. The depiction of the Christ-child as the eucharistic sacrifice in Byzantine art is of considerable interest in relation to early Christian sensitivity to charges of cannibalism, see A.P. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley 1985), 161. Also of interest is M. Halm-Tisserant, *Cannibalisme et Immortalité: L'enfant dans le chaudron en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1993).

¹⁰ *Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life*, trans. with notes and intro. by G. Clark (Translated Texts for Historians 8, Liverpool 1989), 47-48. I have slightly rearranged Gillian Clark's text. See also P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Key Themes in Ancient History, Cambridge 1999), ch. 6: 'Forbidden foods'.

¹¹ Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 7.

Manichaean traditions are distinguished by the kind of food they consume. The strictly vegetarian diet is reserved for the 'learned' and the 'elect', while a carnivorous diet is allowed to the 'hearers' and the 'auditors'. I will come back to the Manichaeans in a moment.

There is little doubt that the most important work on vegetarianism from the late antique period is Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Animal Food*. In this work Porphyry gives a broad history of vegetarianism that surveys the history of Greek philosophy as well as the history of oriental religions. Apart from Plato and Pythagoras he mentions Egyptian, Jewish, Persian and Indian examples, and suggests there is a corresponding metaphysical and ethical world-view shared by these various religious and philosophical traditions. In his report on the Indian Gymnosophists he mentions the priestly caste of the Brahmans and those he calls 'Samanaeans' who are usually understood to be Buddhists.¹² There is a problem from the vegetarian point of view, however, in equating the Samanaeans with Buddhists, as we will see later.

Porphyry raises the question of meat-eating in the context of the relationship between humans and animals and their relations to the gods. The rejection of animal sacrifice in favour of a bloodless sacrifice of cakes and incense represents a return to the golden age when a meatless diet was the order of the day. Porphyry comes to the conclusion, like Christians and Jews, that the gods care more for the intention of those who sacrifice than for the kinds of things sacrificed. Moreover, animals deserve justice because they demonstrate rationality, and compassion for animals in turn makes humans more humane.¹³ In his work *Against the Christians* he criticises Jesus for transferring the demons he casts out of the man possessed into the swine who plunged over the cliff to their deaths,¹⁴ whereas Augustine uses the incident of the Gadarene swine as proof that God did not give the same rights to humans and animals.¹⁵ We may note that throwing a pig over a cliff was a form of

¹² *De Abstinencia* 4, 17-18. On the Samanaeans see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.71; 3.60, where they are also mentioned as vegetarians. The same information is supplied by the third-century Syriac writer Bardaisan of Edessa; see H.J.W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen 1966), 175. The Samanaeans are to be identified with the Sramanas, the ascetics, who are distinguished from the Brahmans, the priests, on a rock edict of Aśoka dated 258 BCE; see *The Edicts of Asoka*, ed. and trans. N.A. Nikam and R. McKeon (Chicago 1959), 27 and below.

¹³ Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 3, 26.

¹⁴ *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The literary remains*, ed. and trans. by R.J. Hoffman (New York 1994), 41-44.

¹⁵ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 22.72, trans. Stothert, *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy*.

sacrifice in the ancient world,¹⁶ and for Jesus the Jew the pig was of course an unclean animal.¹⁷

We also find examples of vegetarianism among Roman philosophers, most notably Seneca and Plutarch. Although a follower of the Stoic school, Seneca practised vegetarianism for a year, and Plutarch wrote discourses *On the Intelligence of Animals* and *On Eating Flesh*.¹⁸ In the former he argues for the rationality of animals and therefore for justice in dealing with them, while in the latter he argues that meat-eating is not only unnatural but bad for us. He links the avoidance of flesh to the reincarnation of the human soul in animals and suggests that to eat so-called 'ensouled' food amounts to cannibalism.¹⁹ Plutarch's concern with the issue of animal rights and non-meat eating arises from his interest in the Platonic and Pythagorean traditions.

The Gnostic and Manichaean Tradition

We have already mentioned a possible connection between the Neopythagorean community structure and that of the Manichaeans and seen that on the question of food prohibitions the parallels are close. The Elkesaites of the third century, with whom the young Mani and his family were associated, did not eat meat, and the religion that Mani himself founded became famous for its stipulation of a diet of non-harming.²⁰ The prohibition on eating meat, often with a similar prohibition on drinking wine and staying celibate, is found among several so-called Gnostic and Jewish-Christian groups in the pre-Constantinian period.²¹ The theology of the body that sustained the vegetarian outlook of the Manichaeans was of course regularly condemned by early Christian writers. However, it is interesting to note the evidence of a bread-and-water rather than a bread-and-wine eucharist tradition

¹⁶ M. Detienne, "The Violence of Wellborn Ladies: Women in the Thesmophoria", in M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant (eds), *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks* (Chicago 1989), ch. 5, esp. 134.

¹⁷ On the fate of the pig see C. Fabre-Vassas, *Singular Beast: Jews, Christians and the Pig* (New York 1997); F.J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh: Food avoidances in the old world* (Connecticut 1961). For an interpretation of the Gadarene incident see I.J. Khalil, "The Orthodox Fast and the Philosophy of Vegetarianism", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 35/3 (1990), 237-259.

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Moralia* 12 (Loeb Classical Library 406, Cambridge, Mass. 1957); and M. Morford, *The Roman Philosophers: From the time of Cato the Censor to the death of Marcus Aurelius* (London 2002), 223-224.

¹⁹ D. Tsekourakis, "Pythagoreanism or Platonism and ancient medicine? The reasons for vegetarianism in Plutarch's 'Moralia'", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.36.1 (1987), 366-387.

²⁰ *The Cologne Mani Codex* (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780: "Concerning the Origin of his Body"), trans. R. Cameron and A.J. Dewey (Missoula. 1979), 11-13.

²¹ On some of these groups, see J.J. Gunther, *St Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A study of Apocalyptic and Jewish sectarian teachings* (Leiden 1973), ch. 3.

in the early church which seems to have been quite widespread, particularly in the east.²² There seems no doubt that the rejection of meat from the daily diet and the rejection of wine from the eucharist were due in part to their association with sacrifice and idolatry.

There is no evidence that every Gnostic group required its members to abstain from meat,²³ although some groups shared a sacred meal of bloodless food, but of the Gnostic-oriented groups of late antiquity it was the Manichaeans in particular who promoted vegetarianism.²⁴ Their rejection of meat was based ultimately on the doctrine that light and darkness are mixed together in creation and that it is necessary to redeem light from the darkness of matter. Although the idea of light trapped in matter is found in a variety of Gnostic-inspired texts,²⁵ it was the Manichaeans who established a connection between food consumption and light redemption. The elect of the community embodied the principles of purity and non-harming by refraining from eating meat, drinking wine and sexual relations, while avoiding injury to natural and living things. Their ascetic lifestyle and special diet placed them on a different level from the auditors and with it the responsibility of working towards salvation of the community. In this the elect served as intermediaries in the process of redeeming the world from the forces of darkness. Because of the purity of their bodies the food they ingested was detoxified, thus allowing light to be released and reunified with the powers of good.²⁶ In this respect we should not be surprised to hear Manichaean detractors ridiculing the elect for their flatulence.²⁷

The elect followed the teaching of the three seals: the seal of the mouth, the seal of the breast, and the seal of the hands. The seal of the mouth was meant to protect them from the eating of meat and the drinking of wine; the seal of the breast from fornication and procreation; and the seal of the hands from harming living things.²⁸ The diet of the elect may in fact have been vegan, because Augustine reports that they did not eat eggs or drink milk.²⁹ They drank only fruit juice and not water.

²² A. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and drink in early Christian ritual meals* (Oxford 1999), ch.4.

²³ M.A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An argument for dismantling a dubious category* (Princeton 1996), 141-143; K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The nature and history of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh 1983), 225.

²⁴ J.D. BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore 2000).

²⁵ Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 85, 115.

²⁶ BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual*, ch. 5.

²⁷ Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 2.5; 20.13.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum* 10.19. It is of considerable interest that the seventh-century Syrian Orthodox bishop, Jacob of Edessa, stipulates that a monk shall not kill an animal, see below.

²⁹ Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum* 16.39; and *De Haeresibus* 46.11, *Sancti Avrelii Avgvstini Opera, Pars XIII, 2* (CCSL 46, Turnhout 1989). See now the translation of this passage in I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu (eds), *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 2004), 189.

Generally their meals consisted of those fruits and vegetables considered to be valuable with regard to the amount of light they contained. Melons and lettuce in particular, because of their white colour, were thought to be rich in this regard.³⁰ In late antiquity the medicinal properties of plants were categorised according to a colour code used by pharmacists. Known as the ‘doctrine of signatures’ it required a patient suffering from jaundice, for example, to be prescribed a plant that was yellow in colour.³¹ Perhaps there is a connection here with the Manichaean choice of food. The meals of the elect were prepared and served to them by the auditors, who accrued merit and absolution through work, or ‘soul-service’ as it was called, undertaken in support of the elect, but the auditors themselves were not obliged to practise vegetarianism, temperance or celibacy. These three ordinances are found among a variety of groups in the period under discussion and were instituted as a protective measure to preserve the integrity of their members, especially their leaders.

The connection between food and salvation is nowhere more apparent than among the Manichaeans. Their ‘gastronomic soteriology’, as we may term it, is unique in a western context, the nearest parallels I know being from India. But it may come as a surprise to learn that vegetarianism for Buddhist monks was not the norm from the beginning.³² The earliest texts to equate Buddhism with vegetarianism date from the fourth and fifth centuries CE and the rise of the Mahāyāna school.³³ To begin with, monks were able to accept so-called ‘blameless’ meat given to them as alms. In the earliest tradition, the Buddha explained that a monk may eat meat provided it is “pure in three respects”. That is, if the monk has not seen, heard or suspected that the animal has been killed specifically for him. Monks should not pick and choose which food is acceptable in their begging-bowls, as this might deprive a donor of the opportunity of gaining merit. The monk receives food as a gift from a donor, and his compassion for donors and other creatures is not compromised by such eating, if it is ‘blameless’ by being “pure in three respects”.³⁴

There is considerable debate about the origins of the Manichaean community structure and the adoption of a diet of non-harming by Mani. Because Mani himself travelled to India it has been suggested that he came into contact with the Buddhist

³⁰ Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, 16.39. According to Galen melons and cabbage are excellent purgatives and diuretics, *De Alimentorum Facultatibus*, bks 1-3. See Grant, *Galen on Food and Drink*, 73, 113, 140-141.

³¹ J.M. Riddle, *Dioscorides on Pharmacy and Medicine* (Austin 1985); and J.D. BeDuhn, “A Regimen for Salvation: Medical Models in Manichaean Asceticism”, *Semeia* 58 (1992), 109-134.

³² P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge 2000), 156-165, and A. Waley, “Did the Buddha die of eating pork”, *Melanges chinois et bouddhiques* 1 (1932), 343-354.

³³ *The Lankavatara Sutra: A Mahayana Text*, trans. D.T. Suzuki (London 1932), ch. 8.

³⁴ Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 159.

sangha and the teaching of *ahimsā* and that this must have influenced his thinking.³⁵ While there may be some truth in this suggestion, it has to be said that he is just as likely to have absorbed Gnostic and Graeco-Roman philosophical ideas, and that his trip to India may simply have confirmed his desire to implement such practices.³⁶ But one Indian tradition that he may have come across on his travels, and which is not often discussed in relation to Manichaeism, is that of Jainism, and the Jains in particular embodied the principle of *ahimsā* far more rigorously than other groups. The Jains were one of several Sramana or ascetic movements at the time of the Buddha in the fifth century BCE, and they taught that all things, including inanimate things, contain a *jīva* or 'life-principle'.³⁷ They wore mouth-masks, brushed the path in front of them, refused to engage in agriculture, and one group, the Digambaras, went without clothes.³⁸ It is not certain however that these were the naked *γυμνοσοφισταί* mentioned in Greek sources from Alexander onwards.³⁹

The Early Christian and Byzantine Monastic Tradition

The early Buddhist position is reminiscent of Paul's advice in relation to eating meat sacrificed to idols: it was all right to eat it so long as you did not know or had not been told that it has been sacrificed. The principle of undertaking actions on grounds of moral consciousness (*συνείδησις*) or expediency is one that is evoked by Paul on a number of occasions.⁴⁰ Although he considered such food untainted because idols were representations of nonexistent gods, meaning that pagan images were simply products of the human imagination,⁴¹ it was important that your

³⁵ A. Henrichs, "Thou shalt not kill a tree: Greek, Manichaean and Indian Tales", *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 16 (1979), 85-108.

³⁶ W. Sundermann, "Mani, India and the Manichaean Religion", *South Asian Studies* 2 (1988), 11-19; S.N.C. Lieu, "Precept and Practice in Manichaean Monasticism", *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 32 (1981), 153-162, repr. in his *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China* (Leiden 1998), ch. 3.

³⁷ P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices* (Cambridge 1990), 11-14. In India the Sramanas or Samanaeans included ascetical groups such as the Jains and the Buddhists, but in western sources the name became associated primarily with Buddhists.

³⁸ P. Dundas, *The Jains*, 2nd ed. (Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices, London 2002), 176-177, where it is suggested that the Jains may have taken a similar position to the early Buddhists on the question of accepting meat.

³⁹ R. Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers: The Brahmins in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995), 99-114.

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:12-13; 8:13; 10:23-25. See further P.J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle Paul to the Gentiles* (Assen and Minneapolis 1990); E.A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and scripture in early Christianity* (Princeton 1999).

⁴¹ See my entry 'Image-Making' in J.A. McGuckin (ed.), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville 2004).

actions were not misunderstood by ‘weaker brethren’.⁴² The issue of intentionality with regard to eating or not eating meat is one that recurs in the history of meat rejection. A similar position was adopted by the rabbis in the Mishna in relation to Jews accepting libation wine and sacrificed meat.⁴³ The particular Pauline passages which discuss the question of whether it is right or not to eat meat and drink wine were debated by Augustine with the Manichaeans who interpreted them as confirming their ‘seal of the mouth’.⁴⁴

Both Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria in the second century mention groups which abstain from either meat or wine or from both.⁴⁵ These groups usually go under the name of ‘enkratites’, a name given to them by early Christian writers because of their perceived preoccupation with rigorous self-control (ἐγκράτεια). In the third century Hippolytus adds rejection of marriage to their rejection of meat and wine and suggests that they are not Christians at all but Cynics.⁴⁶ For some of these early Christian groups it does appear that the rejection of meat is linked to the recognition that the age of sacrifice has come to an end. And given that Christianity considered itself to be the non-sacrificial religion par excellence, it may be thought surprising that it did not make meatless eating a precept. But perhaps these words from 1 Timothy 4:1-5 kept such a precept in check:

In the last days some will abandon the faith and follow a spirit of error and the doctrines of demons who give false teaching...they will forbid marriage and command abstention from foods which God created for the faithful.

Another reason for keeping such a precept in check was the Jewish dietary laws. Ever since the Jerusalem Council of 49 CE Christian writers had been at pains to deny that Jewish dietary practices were binding on Christians, although it is worth recalling what was said at that Council as reported in Acts 15:29: “That you abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication”. The reference to abstaining from ‘things strangled’ is a reference to meat not slaughtered according to Jewish law and does imply that the eating of

⁴² The *scandalum pusillorum* in the early Christian community at Corinth over the eating of meat sacrificed to idols has received a variety of interpretations; see J. Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A social-rhetorical reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (Tübingen 2003); D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London 1995); W.L. Wills, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (Chico 1985).

⁴³ Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, ch. 4.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Moribus Manichaeorum* 14.31-35. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 8-16, trans. S.P. Wood (Fathers of the Church 23, Washington, DC 1954).

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.28.1; Clement, *Paedagogus* 2.2. On the meatless eating of the Therapeutae, see Philo of Alexandria, *De Vita Contemplativa* 9.73-74.

⁴⁶ Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 8.20, ed. M. Marcovich (Patristische Texte und Studien Band 25, Berlin and New York 1986).

kosher meat was a minimum observance for gentiles entering the church.⁴⁷ It is of considerable interest that Christians, unlike Jews and Muslims with their kosher and halal requirements, never advocated a particular technique for slaughtering animals.⁴⁸ On the whole Christians took a laissez faire attitude to meat preparation and their willingness to eat pork was used later to distinguish them from Jews and Muslims.⁴⁹

But there is in fact some evidence for a vegetarian position within mainstream Christianity from the fourth century and this evidence is found in such writers as Basil of Caesarea and Ephrem the Syrian. For Basil those who desire to live their lives in imitation of the life of paradise must make use of fruits and grains, because the diet that includes meat is a result of the fall.⁵⁰ Basil links the event of the fall with the eating of forbidden fruit and therefore with gluttony and the failure to practice abstinence.⁵¹ And elsewhere he says it was only after the flood that wine and meat were introduced into the human food chain because in paradise there was no wine, nor animal sacrifice, nor meat-eating.⁵² But he is careful not to condemn the eating of any one type of food, and on at least one occasion he distances himself from those who condemn the eating of meat.⁵³ For Basil, the kind of food we now consume is essentially comfort food:

⁴⁷ R.M. Grant, "Dietary Laws among the Pythagoreans, Jews, and Christians", *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), 299-310. In the second century Celsus criticises Christians for following the Jews in not paying homage to the gods and in abstaining from certain animals, suggesting that they should take the logical step, like Pythagoras, of rejecting animal meat altogether (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8: 28-29, trans. H. Chadwick [Oxford 1952]).

⁴⁸ Jewish and Muslim law require God's name to be evoked when an animal is slaughtered, but Christians seem only to have offered a thanksgiving before eating it, cf. 1 Tim. 4:4. Note that the killing of a lamb at Easter in Greece is not strictly an ecclesiastical observance, although a priest may bless the animal; see S. Georgoudi, "Sanctified Slaughter in Modern Greece: The 'Kourbânia' of the Saints", *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*, ch. 9.

⁴⁹ Of the three monotheistic faiths only Islam retains animal sacrifice and that is the offering of sheep, goat, or camel for slaughter during the *hajj*; see G.E. von Gruenbaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (London 1951), 33-34. On Islamic food prohibitions, see M. Cook, "Early Islamic Dietary Law", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), 217-277. Of further interest is M. Macuch, "On the Treatment of Animals in Zoroastrian Law", in A. van Tongerloo (ed.), *Iranica Selecta: Studies in honour of Professor Wojciech Skalmowski on the occasion of his seventieth birthday* (Silk Road Studies VIII, Turnhout 2003), 167-190.

⁵⁰ *Basile de Césarée. Sur l'origine de l'homme (Hom. X et XI de l'Hexaéméron)*, A. Smets and M. van Esbroeck (eds) (Sources Chrétiennes 160, Paris 1970), 2.6-7. Also Novatian, *On Jewish Foods*, 2.6., in *Novatian: The Trinity*, trans. R.J. DeSimone (Fathers of the Church 67, Washington, DC 1972).

⁵¹ Basil, *De ieiunio homiliae* 1.3-4, PG 31, 168A-B.

⁵² *Sur l'origine de l'homme* 2.6-7.

⁵³ Basil, *Epistula* 199.28, *Saint Basil: The Letters*, vol. 3 (Loeb Classical Library 243, Cambridge, Mass. 1930).

Since we no longer look upon the tree of life...then butchers and bakers and a variety of cakes and fragrant foods have been given to us for enjoyment, and such things console us for our banishment from that place.⁵⁴

For Ephrem the Syrian a meatless diet was the food of humanity in paradise and Jerome argued for an essentially vegetarian fare.⁵⁵ A treatise on virginity attributed to Athanasius suggests that the diet of the virgin should be vegetarian because “all that is non-animal is pure”, but this has Gnostic overtones.⁵⁶ Considerable exegetical dexterity was employed by some early fathers to explain away the locusts on which John the Baptist fed in order to turn him into a vegetarian.⁵⁷ The carob, or St John’s Bread as it became known, was substituted for the locust, but as a Jew John may not have eaten locusts anyway. It seems that Jewish authorities were divided on the issue of flying insects. On the one hand Leviticus 11:22 absolves locusts and grasshoppers, while Deuteronomy 14:19 is not convinced and prohibits all winged insects. According to Epiphanius the gospel of the Ebionites maintained that John lived off not locusts but cakes made with oil and honey, which is the Septuagint description of manna.⁵⁸ Manna was of course ‘bread from heaven’, a phrase Christ identifies himself with at John 6:33, and the food of angels.

Further evidence from the Syrian Christian traditions shows a more rigorous attitude towards meat-eating and the killing of animals. For example, the seventh-century Syrian Orthodox bishop, Jacob of Edessa, legislates in his sixth canon that a monk shall not kill an animal,⁵⁹ and an anonymous set of rules from the same church states:

If you eat meat in your sickness, do not regard this as a sin, but sadden yourself – you have undergone a defeat, because your virtue is reduced by this slip since a monk cannot eat meat either in his sickness or without sickness.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ *Sur l’origine de l’homme* 2.7.

⁵⁵ Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2, 33, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected prose works*, trans. E.G. Mathews and J.P. Amar (Fathers of the Church 91, Washington, DC 1994); Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23, 221-352.

⁵⁶ T.M. Shaw, “Pseudo-Athanasius, *Discourse on Salvation to a Virgin*”, in R. Valantasis (ed.), *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton 2000), 82-99, esp. 89.

⁵⁷ S. Brock, “The Baptist’s diet in Syriac Sources”, *Oriens Christianus* 54 (1970), 113-124, repr. in his *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in late antiquity* (Aldershot 1999), x. Clement of Alexandria makes Matthew a vegetarian (*Paedagogos* 16).

⁵⁸ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30:13, see *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis*, trans. P.A. Amidon (New York and Oxford 1990), 94-107.

⁵⁹ A. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm 1960), 95

⁶⁰ Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 110-111.

In the Church of the East in the ninth-century we find Ishō Bar Nun in his nineteenth canon maintaining that a monk who eats meat commits a sin close to that of fornication.⁶¹ The association of meat-eating with sexual pleasure is found in a number of sources,⁶² and it may help to explain a later precept in the Church of the East that instructs the mother of a future Catholicos to abstain from meat during her pregnancy and to rear her son on a meatless diet.⁶³

But these arguments for a meatless menu for monks did not lead to a general rejection of meat-eating and the promotion of a vegetarian diet. The second canon of the Council of Gangra which met around 341 outlawed vegetarianism in these terms:

If anyone condemns those who with reverence and faith eat meat that is without blood, has not been sacrificed to idols, and is not strangled [see Acts 15:29 above], claiming that because of their partaking they are without hope, let such a one be anathema.⁶⁴

The canons of this council were aimed at the followers of Eustathius, bishop of Sebaste, one time friend of Basil the Great, who is supposed to have preached a false asceticism that included the avoidance of meat.⁶⁵ The second canon is evidence of ecclesiastical unease over someone thought to be going beyond the church's usual recommendations against certain types of meat. It is clear, however, that meat avoidance in itself is not the issue. In fact, the regular avoidance of meat and wine, except for those who are weak or ill, is one of the most common themes of ascetic and monastic literature from the early Christian period.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 203.

⁶² T.M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and sexuality in early Christianity* (Minneapolis 1988), 234.

⁶³ On this Nazarite vow from the fifteenth century, see A.J. Maclean and W.H. Browne, *The Catholicos of the East and his People* (London 1892), 186.

⁶⁴ The translation of this canon can be found in V.L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A sourcebook* (Minneapolis 1990), 451. Canon 14 of the Council of Ancyra of 314 condemns clergy who, abstaining from meat, refuse to eat vegetables cooked with meat, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church* (Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 14, Grand Rapids 1977), 69. Theodore Balsamon, the twelfth-century Byzantine canon lawyer, in his commentary on canon 63 of the Apostolic Canons, condemns the Latins for having ceased to observe the commands relating to blood and strangled meat (PG 137, 163). This would seem to imply that the Greeks continued to observe them and this is confirmed by the *Pedalion*, the eighteenth-century compilation of canon law by Nikodemos the Hagiorite; see *The Rudder*, trans. D. Cummings (Chicago 1957), 109-110. In his *Contra Faustum* 19.10, Augustine explains that Christians do not observe levitical food laws because Christ has made them redundant. The difference between east and west on this issue may relate to NT textual variants see Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 178-179.

⁶⁵ C.A. Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Euthathios of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea", *Catholic Historical Review* 66 (1980), 16-33.

⁶⁶ Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*, 233.

The problem with vegetarianism for the bishops of Gangra, and for the fathers in general, was the implied or actual criticism of those who regularly eat meat. The avoidance of meat could easily become a focal point for concern over ascetic elitism and a cause of division among Christians. Therefore alimentary renunciation must be a free choice, not a commandment of God. In spite of the praise heaped upon those who lived a life of renunciation, the goodness of what God provided also required to be praised. This needed to be done in order to distinguish the church's position from that of the heretics, particularly the Manichaeans and the encratites. There was, of course, a thin line being trodden here: the promotion of ascetic discipline with its attendant renunciations on the one hand, and the condemnation of heretical extremism on the other. It was not always clear where one finished and the other began and the church's definition of heresy often changed according to the target at which it was aiming.

With the rise of cenobiticism in the fourth century the question of a suitable diet for a Christian monk was answered by Pachomius. He stipulated two meals a day, one during the day and one in the evening. The main meal was in the day and consisted of bread and cooked vegetables and a dessert of some kind, possibly dried fruit or some other morsel.⁶⁷ Palladius fills out the picture by mentioning that the monks lived on a diet of herbs, olives, and cheese, and he is surprised to find that the monks of Tabennesi kept pigs.⁶⁸ At one point a young monk complained to the visiting Pachomius about a shortage of food: "Truly, father, from the time you left us until now they have not cooked either vegetables or porridge for us". When Pachomius went to the kitchen to investigate, he found that those on duty had cut back on the cooking because "almost all the brothers practise abstinence and do not eat cooked food". The cooks had taken it upon themselves to decide that it was right to encourage every member of the community to eat raw food.⁶⁹

Turning to Byzantium, it is not until the Studite *Typikon* of the second half of the ninth century that we find the first extensive treatment of the monastic diet.⁷⁰ It

⁶⁷ *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules. Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2., trans. with an intro. by A. Veilleux (Cistercian Studies Series 46, Kalamazoo 1981), 143. Basil of Caesarea suggests one meal a day of bread, vegetables, and fruits (*The Letters*, 2).

⁶⁸ Palladius, *The Lausiatic History*, trans. R.T. Meyer (Ancient Christian Writers, London 1965), 94-95. The fifth-century historian Sozomen mentions a group of Syrian ascetics called 'grazers' (βόσκοί) who lived on grass cut with a sickle (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.33). The 'grazers' are also mentioned in the *Vita* of Symeon the Fool; see D. Kruger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius' life and the late antique city* (Berkeley 1996), 141, 166.

⁶⁹ P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The making of a community in fourth-century Egypt* (Berkeley 1999), 102.

⁷⁰ See the trans. and intro. by T. Miller, in J. Thomas and A. Constantinides-Hero (eds with the assistance of G. Constable), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A complete translation of the surviving founders' Typika and Testaments* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35, 5 vols, Washington, DC 2000), I, 84-119. On the Studite reforms, see R. Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite: The ordering of holiness* (Oxford Theological Monographs, Oxford 2002).

prescribes special diets for the Easter season and the fasts of the Holy Apostles and of St Philip and for Lent, and for the feast of the Annunciation. As in later *typika* the diet is mostly vegetarian, permitting fish but not meat. Like the Pachomian rule it stipulates two meals a day – a midday meal for which food is prepared and an optional evening meal of bread and leftovers – but unlike the Pachomian tradition it makes wine the staple beverage.

It specifies that in the time between Easter and All Saints there should be two cooked dishes, consisting of vegetables and legumes with olive oil. Fish, cheese and eggs are allowed as well, together with three measures of wine at midday and three in the evening, while specifying that fish should be eaten on the feast of the Annunciation. During the fasts of the Holy Apostles and of St Philip no fish, cheese or eggs are eaten, except on those days when the hours are not sung. Instead two cooked dishes, one of vegetables with olive oil and one of legumes without oil, are eaten.⁷¹

During Lent only one meal a day is prescribed, except on Saturday and Sunday. In the first week of Lent the meals consist of boiled beans, chickpeas, and cabbage without olive oil, dried figs, and if available, chestnuts, cooked pears and prunes. During the other weeks boiled beans, olives, and legumes with a vegetable seasoned with ground nutmeg are served, but without fruit for dessert. Throughout Lent a concoction called εὔκρατον is drunk, made up of pepper, cumin, anise, and hot water. Other foods mentioned for the Lenten season are salted fish and *kollyva*, the latter a dish of boiled wheat, sweetened or unsweetened, prepared for memorial services or celebration of a feast.⁷² The reference to meals served without olive oil is part of a more rigorous fasting system known as ‘xerophagy’ (ξηροφαγία), or ‘dry eating’ which prohibits the use of wine and olive oil and consists of eating dry bread and fruits or raw vegetables.⁷³ The food symbolism associated with particular fasts and feast days requires further research.

The Byzantine Christian Dualist Tradition

There is no doubt that the rejection of meat-eating became a criterion for assessing heresy in Byzantium and the western Middle Ages. Writing against the Cathars in the twelfth century Eckbert of Schönau details ten charges against them and the second he says is the avoidance of meat:

⁷¹ M. Dembinska, “Diet: A Comparison of Food Consumption between Some Eastern and Western Monasteries in the 4th-12th Centuries”, *Byzantion* 55 (1985), 431-462.

⁷² See ‘kollyva’ in K. Parry et al. (eds), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford 1999). Epiphanius refers to a fourth-century group of women, the Collyridians, who offered cakes in worship of the Virgin Mary (*Panarion* 79.9).

⁷³ See ‘xerophagy’ in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*. Tertullian in his work *On Fasting* mentions that the Montanists observed ‘xerophagies’; see *The Fathers of the Third Century*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids 1979), 102.

Those who have become full members of this sect avoid all meat. This is not for the same reason as monks and other followers of the spiritual life abstain from it; they say meat must be avoided because all flesh is born of coition and therefore they think it unclean.⁷⁴

The rejection of meat on the grounds that it was a product of sexual relations and therefore unclean harks back to earlier statements attributed to Gnostic groups and the Manichaeans.

In Byzantium the avoidance of meat was preached as part of Bogomil doctrine. The rejection of meat and wine by the Bogomils was linked to a theology that obliged them to live a more austere lifestyle.⁷⁵ Their rejection of wine did not result in a bread-and-water eucharist, as they rejected the eucharist along with the other Christian sacraments. In fact anti-sacramentalism is a prominent feature of their teaching, extending to the rejection of icons and relics, if we can believe the reports of their persecutors.⁷⁶ Their rejection of matter as a vehicle for grace, and their allegorical interpretation of Scripture, puts them in the same category as the Paulicians, but the Paulicians do not appear to have gone in for food taboos.⁷⁷

In what is believed to be the earliest witness to Bogomil doctrine, the tenth-century *Discourse of Cosmas Against the Bogomils*, it is reported that they taught the devil has ordered men to take wives, eat meat and drink wine. Cosmas comments on this by saying that they avoid meat not from abstinence or Christian asceticism, but because they consider it impure.⁷⁸ Later writings against the sect include references to their rejection of meat, and it is a charge laid against them in the anti-Bogomil additions to the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy* made in the thirteenth century. There it states: "To those who say that marriage in the Lord and eating meat as God allows are an abomination to God and therefore outlaws them both, anathema".⁷⁹ The writers of these texts make the point that what separates the orthodox from the heretic is the latter's insistence that certain things are offensive

⁷⁴ Y. Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist religions from antiquity to the Cathar heresy* (New Haven and London 2000); C. Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A history of vegetarianism* (London 1989).

⁷⁵ J. and B. Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c.650-1405* (Manchester 1998), 30. According to the Byzantine heresiologist Euthymius Zigabenus, writing in the early twelfth century, the Bogomils may have been vegans because they avoided dairy products as well as meat (*Panoplia Dogmatica*, PG 130, 1325C). This seems to have been the case with the Cathars too, see M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Prague 1974), 115.

⁷⁶ S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A study of the Christian dualist heresy* (Cambridge 1947), 74; D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A study in Balkan neo-manichaeism* (Cambridge 1948), 127-128.

⁷⁷ See N. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy* (The Hague 1967).

⁷⁸ Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 128.

⁷⁹ J. Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie. Édition et commentaire", *Travaux et mémoires* 2 (1967), 67.

to God. From the orthodox point of view no group outside the church had the authority to pronounce on issues in such absolute and clearly defined terms. On the whole the church had learned that it was better to leave some things unsaid and to follow unwritten custom in matters relating to Christian practice.

Often it was what heretics practised, as much as what they preached, that annoyed the church authorities. The Bogomils abstained from eating meat, drinking wine, and sexual relations just as many of their fellow Orthodox monks and laymen did. The Byzantine monastic tradition set them a good example to follow when it came to renouncing the world for a disciplined life. But it was because their motives for embracing asceticism were seen to be different from those recognised by the church that their troubles started.⁸⁰ The abstention from meat and wine for the sake of discipline was one thing, but the rejection of them out of disgust was quite another.⁸¹ The cosmogony and theodicy that sustained this type of outlook implied that God was ultimately responsible for the presence of evil in the world. Therefore, from the church's point of view, if your theology was wrong, then your motives for practising abstinence were wrong. Orthodox *praxis* in the end came down to right intention. This was equally the case with regard to icon veneration during the iconoclastic controversy.⁸²

Conclusion

I hope from this brief survey of meat avoidance in late antiquity and Byzantium that we can see some things more clearly. In the pagan philosophical tradition the rejection of meat was linked to a discussion about animal rights because of the perceived resemblance between humans and the animal kingdom. The doctrine of metempsychosis was only one aspect of that debate. It is ironic that the Christian monastic tradition made vegetarianism respectable, as opposed to its promotion by heretical groups, but at the same time it divided the Christian community along Manichaean lines. Bishops like Basil the Great and others had to tread a fine line between prescription and proscription as far as meat avoidance was concerned. The characteristics that unite the diverse religious groups in late antiquity and Byzantium are those that relate to practice as well as doctrine, a common practice being the adoption of a meatless diet.

The concern over meat eating in the early church rarely led to further discussion about animal welfare in the Christian world, in spite of the praise bestowed on those who abstained from meat for spiritual reasons. But then Christians did not

⁸⁰ On the theology of Byzantine asceticism, see my "Maximus the Confessor and the Theology of Asceticism", *Phronema* 17 (2002), 51-57.

⁸¹ See the long excursus on the right intention in abstaining from meat in the *Pedalion*, 91-94.

⁸² See my *Depicting the Word: Byzantine iconophile thought of the eighth and ninth centuries* (Leiden 1996), ch. 17.

embrace vegetarianism out of consideration for animals. In his account of his visit to Constantinople in 1168 the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela writes:

Near the wall of the palace there is a place for the emperor's amusement called the Hippodrome. Every year, on the day of the birth of Jesus, the emperor holds there a great spectacle... And they bring on lions, tigers, bears and wild asses, causing them to engage in combat one with another....⁸³

It would appear that not much had changed from the days when similar events were staged at the Colosseum in Old Rome. Although the Byzantine church may not have approved of such spectacles, it could not prevent the Christian population of New Rome from going to the Hippodrome, even on Christmas Day.

⁸³ *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*, trans. E.N. Adler with intro. by M.A. Signer (Malibu, Cal. 1983), 70-71. It was depictions of scenes from the Hippodrome that were favoured by the iconoclast emperor Constantine V; see the *Vita* of Stephen the Younger, M.-F. Auzépy, *La Vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre: Introduction, édition et traduction* (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 3, Aldershot 1997), 26.

Addendum

Athanasius Nicholas John's Louvaris

Fast and Abstinence in Byzantium

In 2003 Orthodox Christians throughout the world who observed their church's prescriptions on fasting and abstinence, were expected to abstain from meat for 182 days – 195 actually if they followed the Julian Calendar, just a fraction less than half the year or a dozen days longer respectively – and during that period, except for seven days, to abstain also from dairy products, while they would be allowed to partake of scaled fish for thirty-seven of those days. Finally, on twenty-one of those days during which they could not partake of foods in the three previously mentioned categories, they would also abstain from oil and wine. The number of fasts varies each year, according to the date on which the Paschal festival falls.

This, by any account, is a pretty severe diet, especially if one were to take into account the additional rules of fasting on some of those days. The latter would entail eating less of the allowed food and having fewer meals than normal.

These regulations, designed for the spiritual and physical benefit of faithful Orthodox Christians, although initiated in the pre-Byzantine period of church history were certainly developed and formulated during 'Byzantine' days proper, during the forging of the eastern Roman Empire, when the dominion of the autokrator, the faithful Basileus of the Romans, extended to the entire Balkan peninsula, much of the Near East and part of the Middle East, Egypt till the seventh century, south Italy and even parts of Spain and north Africa for a while,¹ not forgetting, of course, the Chersonese on the north coast of the Black Sea, a portion of which it clung to till the end.²

Were you to think that such abstinence and/or fasting for half a year might constitute a tough proposition, think again. For, depending upon the day on which the Paschal Feast (Resurrection Sunday) is celebrated – it being a movable feast – up to another twenty-one days may have to be added to the figure, bringing the figure to 203 or, in the case of those who still cling to the Old Julian calendar such as the Russian Orthodox, as many as thirty-four days, thus bringing the possible final tally to 216 days of abstinence from meat and dairy products in a year. One is

¹ This was a process of continuous contraction or expansion over its 1,000-year-old existence.

² Constantine XI Palaeologus was offering the latter as an inducement to western princes to extend to him their assistance in his desperate attempt to defend Constantinople against Mahomet II.

tempted to speculate as to whether the church fathers responsible for this legislation possessed some medical and dietary prescience, acquired without the benefit of the research carried out in our times.

It is true that fasting as such is encountered in pre-Christian times, in the old testamentary period and even in some pagan cults; however, this factor did not determine the evolution of Christian fasting and abstinence, just as the existence of some forms of monasticism in pre-Christian Judaism and oriental asceticism in pagan cults had no bearing on Christian monastic life, as the late Professor Panayiotis Christou pointed out in his treatise “The monastic life in the Eastern Orthodox Church”.³

St John the Baptist’s reliance on wild honey and locusts and the feeding of the wandering Jews in the desert with ‘manna’ may be viewed as a primitive form of abstinence on the principle of “eat only when in need and what you can find”. Moses had fasted for forty days and nights (Exod 34:28). Jesus Christ too fasted for forty days and nights (Matt 4:2, Lk 4:1-2), though we are not given much data by the gospels on his ordeal.

There are other references in them to fasting, as for example when the great Nazarene, as recorded in Matt 6:16-18, castigates those who would adopt a sad countenance during their fasting, instead of a joyful one stemming from a rewarding spiritual exercise. Fasting is certainly associated with great figures of the Old Testament other than Moses: Daniel, Esther and Zechariah, to mention but some. The latter’s celebrated verse in the homonymous book of the Old Testament (8:19) is known only too well to exegetai and devotees.

Granted the existing practice of some forms of fasting by the Hebrews, it was the Christian church, however, which initiated and developed Christian, eventually Byzantine Christian fasting. As early as the first recorded canons of the church, those known as the Apostolic Canons – irrespective of their chronological origins and dating – certain basic rules were laid down. The sixty-ninth Apostolic Canon confirmed largely established fasting practices; canon 63 imposed severe sanctions for consuming unclean meat. This was only a repetition of the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem, held in 49 CE and as outlined in Acts 15:9. Other councils followed suit,⁴ also promulgating appropriate regulations on fasting and abstinence,

³ Reproduced from A.J. Philippou (ed.) *Orthodox Ethos: Vol. 1 – Studies in Orthodoxy* (Oxford 1964), 2.

⁴ Canon 67 of the Quinisext and by implication canon 2 of the regional Council of Gangra in Paphlagonia (340 CE); see ΠΗΔΑΛΙΟΝ (*The Rudder*) with commentary by the hieromonk Dorotheos and the monk Nikodemus, 9th edn, by the Most Rev. Metropolitan Panteleimon of Corinth (Athens 1982).

such as the regional Council of Laodicea in 364 CE⁵ and the Quinisext Oecumenical Council (in Trullo) in 691-692 CE.⁶

The earliest rituals that have come down to us in various codices point to fasting being observed prior to certain great feasts of the Church, also independently of these, as a form of self-discipline and/or commemoration of certain important events. Abstinence on Wednesdays and Fridays from meat, dairy products and fish appears as one of the earliest observances – Friday commemorating the day of Christ's passion and death and Wednesday, the day of his betrayal by Judas. Later, in monasteries, Monday⁷ was to be added as a day of abstinence, extra time for self-discipline.

But there was another important factor associated with fasting: the emergence of eremitical life and style, in the course of the third century CE in Egypt and later in Syria, which was to spread to all the regions of the eastern Roman empire and from there transplanted to the West in the fourth century by St Athanasius, the famous bishop of Alexandria.⁸ Besides, in the Egyptian deserts, the hermits had been demonstrating that fasting went hand in hand with contemplation and prayer.

In the same century, another illustrious church father and pillar of Byzantine Christianity, St Basil the Great, was advocating restraint, read 'abstinence', vis-a-vis the eating habits of the faithful. Realistically, and foreshadowing the medical conclusions reached much later, especially in our times, he pointed out, in his first letter, that a rich assortment of foods is not prescribed for the sick but fasting and dieting should be practised instead, adding that it is due to the abundance and variety of foods that so many types of illness have come into being. By the time Byzantium had acquired its distinct cultural, sociological and religious identity, the Church had enshrined fasting and abstinence into the life of the faithful in a rational and systematic way.

⁵ In canon 50.

⁶ In canon 56 of the Regional Council of Carthage (418-424 CE) and canon 29 of the Quinisext.

⁷ In monasteries in the West, Saturday was chosen instead, in contravention of conciliar canons which explicitly forbade it, inter alia the second Apostolic Council. This led to persistent accusations of the Orthodox East which kept censuring the Western church, especially the 'Church of the Romans' (in Canon 55 of the Quinisext) regarding the contraventions. During the discussions held in 1112 CE, in Constantinople, on East-West differences by the visiting Peter Grossolianus, archbishop of Milan and Byzantine theologians, the Latin fast on Saturday was described as a substantial difference. See A.P. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Eppstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries* (Berkeley 1985), 188. Patriarch Michael Cerularius, in his famous letter to Peter, patriarch of Antioch, in 1054, taunts the Latin monks for fasting "the whole day on Saturday" and having "cheese or eggs on Friday", *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae Graecae et Latinae saeculo undecimo composita extant*, C. Will (ed.) (Leipzig and Marburg 1861), 180-182.

⁸ During his exile to the south of Gaul by the Emperor because of his championing of Orthodox beliefs against the Arians.

Numerous canons were promulgated from the fourth century onwards at regional and ecumenical councils, their recurrence suggesting that human frailty fell short sometimes of religious expectations; the Byzantines had to be reminded of their obligations again and again. This repetition also points out the importance of fasts and abstinence in the daily life of the totality of the Christian people, from the anointed ruler down to the humble peasant and worker.

One should distinguish between abstinence from certain categories of food and fasting *per se*, which meant that either no food/drink at all was to be consumed or partaken of during only part of the day, usually starting in the late afternoon or evening.

Νηστεία in the absolute sense means no food at all being consumed. Adolph Adam in *The Liturgical Year* mentions that before Easter Christians fasted for forty hours or two full days.⁹ The Muslim practice during Ramadan of no food being taken before sunset has its origins in the Christian observance of νηστεία and, with respect to Islam, it is noteworthy that some of the Church fathers, following the rise of that religion in the East, considered it as a Christian heresy.

In ecclesiastical parlance though, fasting translates into foods designated as dry, i.e. various nuts, dried fruit, also boiled vegetables and legumes with no oil added, fresh fruit, plain olives, the simplest of bread, no wine and only one meal a day. This was the basic fare in monasteries during strict fasting days and among the laity and this is what is meant to be practised nowadays by the Orthodox clergy and laity, at least during the first week of the Great Lent and Holy Week.¹⁰

Ascetic monks, especially hermits (anchorites) would restrict themselves to bread and water and sometimes would not eat at all. Bread and water would also be imposed as a penance on the laity (with more severe penalties for the clergy) for serious sins.¹¹ Significantly, fasting was designated as a disciplinary measure in several canons of the conciliar church and in some of those of the fathers of the church (which acquired, in time, mandatory authority), the purpose being to help rehabilitate sinners.¹²

Interestingly enough, the canons about fasting and abstinence did not differentiate between the secular clergy and laity on the one hand and the monastics on the other. Though the struggle for perfection was identified with monastic institutions (its habitat *par excellence*, where the rules would be

⁹ A. Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its history and its meaning after the reform of the liturgy* (Collegeville, Minn. 1992).

¹⁰ Holy Week, the culmination of the Great Lent, is an entity of its own in the Orthodox calendar.

¹¹ Such as fornication, sodomy, masturbation. It was imposed for a while even on those who had contracted a second marriage.

¹² As, for example in the canons of St John the Faster (6th century CE).

implemented and if need be enforced), the laity and the parish secular clergy had to observe them too, upon pain of censure, penance and worse.¹³

The monasteries did, however, refine fasting and abstinence and added practical codicils to the written law. On strict fast days, for example during the entire Great Lent (the seven weeks, including Holy Week, prior to the Paschal Festival), there would be only one meal a day instead of the usual two or even three for festive days. Meat was to be totally and permanently banned from monastic houses with certain exemptions.¹⁴

Exceptionally, meat might be served to visiting influential lay patrons or other personalities as is shown in the case of the famous anecdote regarding St Symeon the Theologian, when he was abbot of the monastery of St Mamas at the beginning of the eleventh century, and his disciple Arsenios.¹⁵

During the most festive period of all, between Resurrection Sunday and Pentecost, the monks had four meals a day, according to some surviving monastic typika.¹⁶

The late Professor Basil Stephanides of the University of Athens refers in his *Ecclesiastical History*¹⁷ to the “Convent of the Nuns of the Empress” in Constantinople as one where the nuns were allowed to consume birds, though no other type of meat.¹⁸ The presence of peacocks¹⁹ in some monastery gardens, and several imperial edicts which were issued so that they might be removed, indicate that these particular institutions had received no appropriate dispensations, unlike those that had received permission to eat cranes – a very popular dish since ancient times – by imperial golden ‘chrysobuls’.²⁰

It should be stressed that certain western interpreters have failed to appreciate the differences between the diet of ‘heroic’ hermits and monks in coenobitic establishments and their respective motivations.

Ann Wharton Epstein, in “Popular and Aristocratic Cultural Trends”,²¹ finds the provisions of the typikon of the Pantokrator Monastery, recorded in 1136, almost

¹³ The penalties for the clergy were severe and included, in certain cases, even excommunication.

¹⁴ Under certain circumstances, in later times, with the development of the idiorhythmic style of monastery, meat could be consumed but had to be cooked outside the cloisters.

¹⁵ Khazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*. In a farcical episode, Arsenios, who looked indignant when roast pigeons were served, was ordered by St Symeon to eat some but was then stopped and rebuked by him.

¹⁶ Otherwise eating was allowed twice a day.

¹⁷ In the 2nd revised and expanded edition, published in 1975.

¹⁸ Noble ladies of imperial or high aristocratic rank who took the veil were usually allowed certain privileges, including servants.

¹⁹ Peacocks were renowned for their meat.

²⁰ Vatopedi Monastery, on Holy Mount Athos, had a dispensation to keep peacocks in its gardens but, it would seem, not for eating purposes as meat was (and is) banned from the Mount.

²¹ Chapter in Khazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 74-119.

decadent in matters of fasting and abstinence, because the monks were allowed on Saturday and Sunday shellfish and molluscs, vegetables cooked in oil, as well as dry vegetables and wine. She overlooks the ban on fasting on any Saturday, save Great and Holy Saturday or on any Sunday according to the canons of the church. She also forgets that coenobitic monks were not hermits,²² and that shellfish and molluscs were fasting food.

Non-observance of the rules of fasting and abstinence was not, suffice it to say, unknown. Laxity penetrated sections of the monastic world and no doubt some of the itinerant monks, who became a recurring problem in the Byzantine church and had to be inevitably ordered back from time to time to their conventual abodes by imperial novellae and conciliar decrees, must have picked up some non-religious eating habits while residing in the world outside their monastic walls. But by far and wide strict observance was adhered to, indeed to the point where monastic customs spilled over into the parochial scene over and above the enacted conciliar regulations on fasting and abstinence.

In order to understand how it all worked, one needs to understand the system of categorisation of foods vis à vis the rules of abstinence and the partaking of food, *κατάλυσις*, which were gradually adopted.

At the top of the culinary ladder were all kinds of meat. Permanently excluded and totally banned upon pain of excommunication for all were the *πνικτά*, meat in which blood had clotted, had not been allowed to run out, or came from animals which had died in snares by suffocation, or as a result of having been mauled by predators, or had expired from natural causes.

Equally proscribed was the *αίματίον*, a blood sausage which, despite its being forbidden to Christians, seemed to exert a strange fascination on some – an excellent example of the forbidden fruit being particularly desirable. Not only church law proscribed it but secular decrees too, with severe penalties imposed not only on consumers but also on providers, including having one's hair closely cropped, the confiscation of property and exile.²³

In the early centuries, the church had, of course, also forbidden the consumption of sacrificial meat, the notorious *εἰδωλόθυτα*, offered on the altars of idols and pagan gods, as a defiled substance, because of the underlying theology, another reason being that the blood of the animal was included in the sacrifice.

Otherwise all kinds of meat, including pork, could be consumed on meat-fare days by the clergy and laity and, it would seem, many monastics while residing outside their monasteries.

The next category was that of dairy products, permissible on all meat-fare days and during the week before the Great Lent proper. Fish, in addition to being

²² They were not expected to live on bread and water alone, as many hermits often did.

²³ Listed in Emperor Leo the Wise's fifty-eighth Novella (*Νεαρά*), who also imposed whipping as punishment for the culprit.

allowed during all days in the previous two classifications, was allowed at certain other times, i.e. on most weekdays, except most Wednesdays and Fridays, during large portions of the pre-Christmas Lent and the Apostolic Lent as well on certain great feast days during lenten periods.

The fourth category consisted of lenten days and most Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, when meat, fish and dairy products were out but seafood, shellfish and molluscs were in; the latter were almost a borderline case but could be consumed most of the time even when oil and wine were not sanctioned in the last and fifth category, which consisted of unoiled, boiled vegetables, legumes and fruit and concurrent with fasting.

Phaidon Koukoules, one of the most valuable commentators on the mores of Byzantium, is emphatic on this point, quoting Theodoros Prodromos, Theodoros Stouditis and Michael Glykas, and refers to two *typika* of monasteries from Palaeologue times, also quoted by Delehayé.²⁴ Koukoules reminds us that in Byzantine times shellfish and molluscs were called *ἀγνά*, meaning “undefiled, bloodless, clean”, and their consumption *ἀγνοφάγια*; they included calamari, cuttlefish, octopus, crabs, crayfish, lobsters, yabbies, oysters, mussels, clams, sea urchins etc.²⁵

The pre-Christmas Lent lasted from November 15 to Christmas Eve with everything from fish down permissible till December 17 (December 12 is sometimes mentioned and stuck to), except on Wednesdays and Fridays. The Apostolic Fast began on the second Monday after Pentecost and continued till June 28, the eve of the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, hence its name, with again all food from fish and the lower categories allowed, Wednesdays and Fridays excepted.

During Our Lady’s Lent from August 1 till August 14, the eve of the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, not even fish would be permitted with the single exception of the Feast of the Transfiguration, on August 6.

The most momentous of the lenten periods however was the Great Lent, six whole weeks plus the Great and Holy Week of the Passion prior to the Paschal Feast when categories four and five, the hardest, would be enforced except for fish sneaking in on the Feasts of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday.

The antiquity of most of these observances is also attested by their striking similarity to those followed in the Coptic Orthodox Church, which became progressively estranged from the main body of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. Its fasting and abstinence regulations are very much like those of the Eastern Orthodox Church to this very

²⁴ H. Delehayé, *Deux typica byzantins de l’époque des Paléologues* (Bruxelles 1921), 81, 82.

²⁵ Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς = Vie et Civilisation Byzantines*, vol. 5, dirigée par Octave Merlier (Collection de l’Institut Francais d’Athenes 76, Paris 1952), ch. 1.

day, except for a few extra days it added to the pre-Christmas and Great Lents, in the tenth century.²⁶

In addition to having substantially influenced Byzantine cuisine, the lenten regime and other observances of fasting and abstinence within the 'Byzantine Commonwealth' have had a lasting effect on the cuisines which succeeded it through derivation or evolution, after the Byzantine state had ceased to exist, in the territories and/or countries which had been part of it at one time or other.

A wealth of dips and salads, various other *hors d'oeuvre*, a plethora of dishes using shellfish and molluscs towards which the Byzantines had developed a fascination if not obsession, very many preparations using legumes, salads and vegetables, confectionery and pastries based on oil and non-dairy products are encountered nowadays in a number of national cuisines, in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean, as a result of the far-reaching influence of the Byzantine church's hold on the people's eating habits.

Even in Egypt, which the Byzantines lost in the seventh century, the survival of Christians, in both their oriental and eastern groupings, and their religious dietary habits have left their imprint on many dishes of the entire population, most of which is actually Muslim. Indeed one often encounters throughout the lands which once belonged to the eastern Roman empire, such dishes as stuffed vine or cabbage leaves, or tomatoes, aubergines, zucchini or capsicums with rice and oil, herbs, garlic and occasionally sultanas and nuts – a typical lenten meal, very popular on Fridays.

The large consumption of fish, quite apart from the abundant supply and variety of the product, in the seas and rivers of the Byzantine world, should be seen within the context of the rules of abstinence which allowed their use on certain days when meat and dairy products were forbidden, not to mention their popularity in monasteries, where meat was not supposed to be consumed.

On the subject of dips, just a few examples: *taramosalata*, made with fish roe (a distant, poor relative of caviar from the Caspian Sea), oil, lemon juice and breadcrumbs or stale plain bread moistened with water, remains the most popular dip among the Hellenes and their culinary converts, during lenten but also other periods. Or dips made with chickpeas or walnuts and chilli, which the Lebanese, Syrians and Egyptians favour, or the varieties of the aubergine dip, almost universal throughout the Near and Middle East and the Balkans.

Numerous dishes using calamari, cuttlefish and squid with rice and oil are another facet of the same story, especially considering that, as pointed out earlier, seafood as distinct from fish is allowed on days when fish is forbidden. I retain a vivid memory of some Athonite monks, outside the kitchen of Karakalou

²⁶ The Nineveh Fasting and Jonah's Fasting.

Monastery cleaning calamari for the Saturday and Sunday meals during Great Lent when the rules prevalent on weekdays are relaxed.

Or an enormous poached fish, served during a festive lunch at Karyes, in the refectory of the Athonite Ecclesiastical Academy, on a Feast Day.²⁷ The fish was so substantial and had released so much of its fat, that the simple dressing of olive oil and lemon juice which the cook had poured on it blended with the fish fat, and resulted in an instant eggless but delicious mayonnaise *en place*.

Fish figured prominently at Byzantine tables, monastic and not, and was the culinary centrepoint on those days of the year when meat was banned, especially on the feasts of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday during Great Lent, when the strict abstinence of the seven weeks' period would thus be relaxed. Fish has been popular, or course, among the Hellenes since ancient times, the sea playing an ever important part in their lives.

Some of the recipes for fish dishes in the world inhabited by the Hellenic people or influenced by them have hardly changed in two and a half thousand years and have come down to us through the Byzantine period. There is ample testimony to this.²⁸ The traditional grilled fish with herbs, olive oil and lemon juice sprinkled on it is only one of several surviving favourites.

Many dishes were created with the rules of abstinence in mind, among them some extremely popular confectionery and pastries. The celebrated halva, cooked in the saucepan, using olive or sesame oil, semolina, sugar and some spices, cinnamon mainly, is only one example. The traditional loukoumades, dumplings made only with flour, yeast and water, quickly deep fried in oil and covered with honey and/or sugar syrup and cinnamon again is another – enormously popular during lenten periods, beloved by monks, other than hermits of course.

The very large selection of sweet preserves of fruit and even vegetables are another product of the inventiveness of abstaining Orthodox Christians. Who has ever said that one has to stop eating delicacies when abstaining? Fasting, though, does impose additional restraints and curbs culinary frolicking.

Cheesefare Week – the seven days immediately prior to the Great Lent, when dairy products may be consumed – has been the occasion for the creation of certain other inventive dishes, based on butter, milk, eggs and their derivatives. That is when the famous tyropites, cheese pies with filo or other pastry, the well-known triangles, become the *pièce de résistance*, though they are made at other times too. They are a speciality of countries in the Balkans, especially Greece and those of the

²⁷ The Feast of the Three Great Hierarchs and Universal Doctors of the Church on February 12, 1977 (January 30, 1977 according to the Old Calendar).

²⁸ Another important ancient source, Athenaeus (2nd cent. CE), in his *Deipnosophistai* mentions methods of cooking and serving food, such as meat and fish which were used in Byzantium and are still used in Greece today, for example the strewing of herbs on grilled fish and the mixing of vinegar and oil in sauceboats.

former Yugoslavia²⁹ and even Turkey, which has inherited so many of the cuisines of the lands it once ruled in imperial Ottoman times, and which some culinary commentators have wrongly described as the source instead of the recipient of the cuisines of its subject nations.

On the other hand, the Russ, Ukrainians, Great Russians and Byelorussians who took their Orthodox religion from Byzantium from the tenth century onwards, in due course concocted their famous pancakes for Cheesefare Week with a variety of fillings (except meat) and turned it into a culinary highlight.

It was a fact of 'Byzantine' life and is a fact of Orthodox life nowadays that lenten food may end up being as tempting as the non-lenten one.

Considering the previously mentioned dietary strictness, one could imagine the welcoming mood the people of the Byzantine empire would be in, after a period of fast and abstinence, especially a long one such as the Great Lent, as its end drew near. The jubilation generated by the Paschal Feast was to some extent fuelled by the end of dietary restrictions. They fasted and abstained hard but they also celebrated hard. Seven whole days the Paschal Feast lasted.³⁰ Koukoules, like many other Orthodox writers, uses the verb λαμπρύνω (and its derivatives), i.e. "to brighten up, to shine", in describing the end of fasting and abstinence, especially regarding the Paschal Feast.

In conclusion, the preservation and continuing practice of the religious dietary laws of the Byzantines through the Orthodox church and right down to our times constitutes perhaps in itself the greatest testimony of the balance these laws achieved and their usefulness, which was recognised quite early in the piece. That they continue to be observed nowadays by many of the Orthodox faithful, and without the threat of the imposition of the harsh sanctions of yesteryear if not adhered to, while they are still respected by those of them who cannot or will not observe them, due to human frailty or weakness, is a strong indication not only of their durability but also of their intrinsic value.

²⁹ Under this same group of dishes *bougatsa* in North Greece and *gibenitsa* in Serbia should be categorised.

³⁰ The extended, Great Paschal Octave lasts till Ascension Thursday and is festive too but not as intensely as the First Week, the New or Bright Week.

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